

Farewell democracy: Thailand's military digs in

New

Internationalist

Putting the world to rights since 1973

NI 484 July/August 2015
newint.org

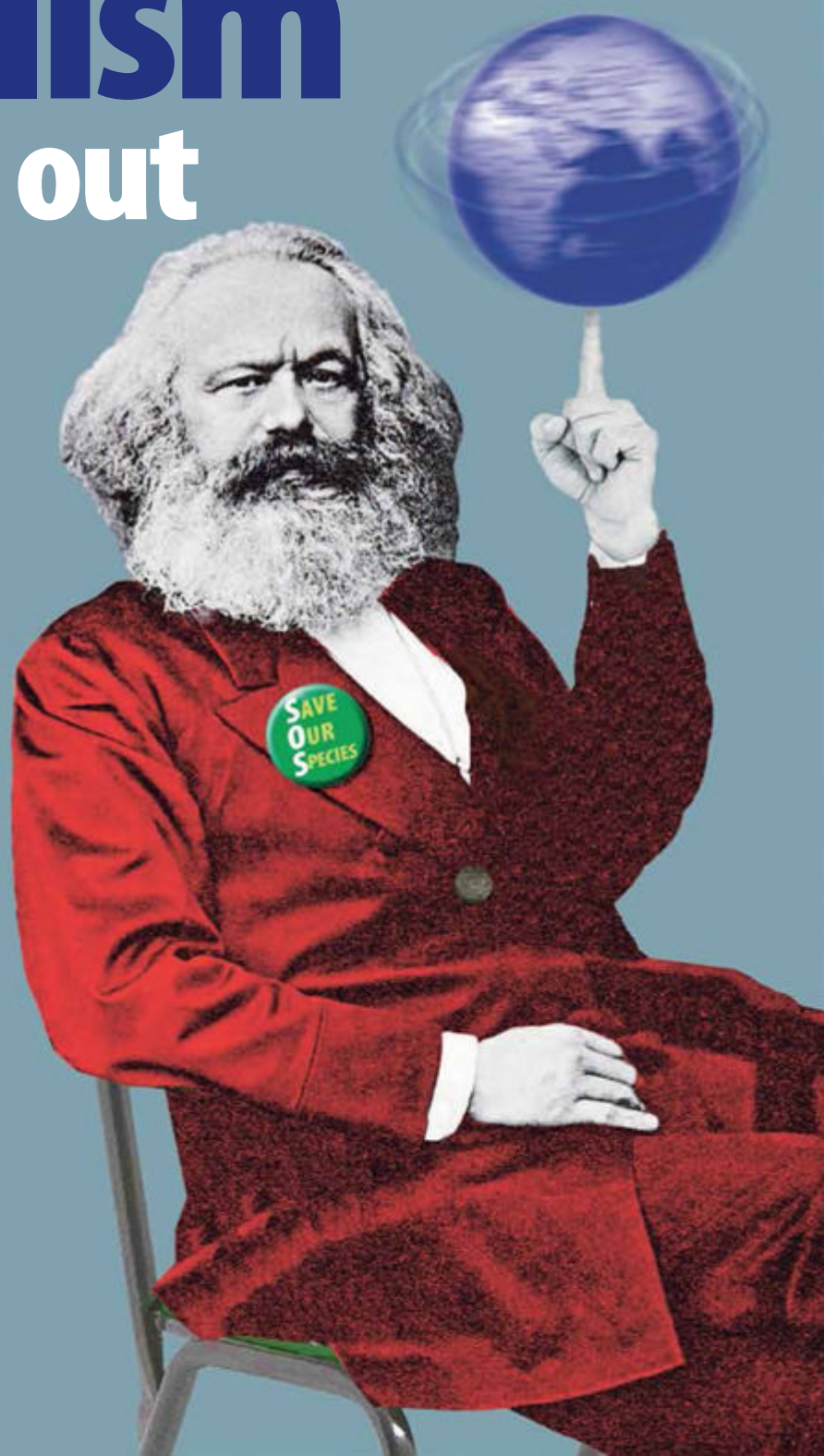
**Whitewashing
history in Japan**

**Top pics from
HotDocs film festival**

**Vermont's great
socialist hope**

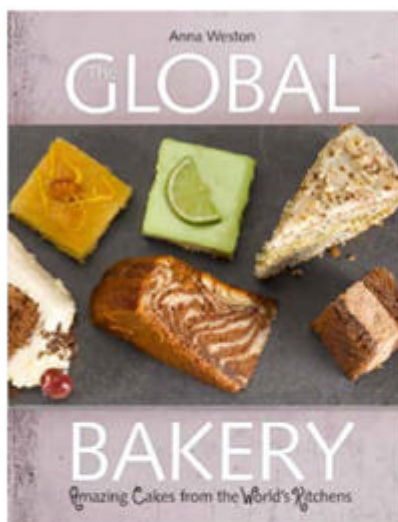
Capitalism is spinning out of control

**A guide
to viable
alternatives**



CANADA & USA \$6.95



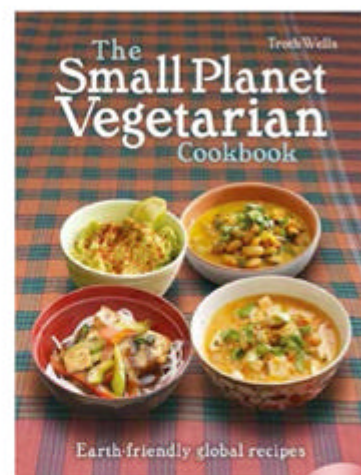


GLOBAL BAKERY

Price \$25.00

Code BGLOB

Gathers over 60 cake recipes from all around the world in one volume. With all occasions catered for, you'll go on an epic journey of taste with home-baker extraordinaire Anna Weston, discovering the world's favourite cakes along the way. Includes vegan, gluten-free and wheat-free recipes to suit all tastes. Hardback. Size: 25cm x 19cm. 184 pages.



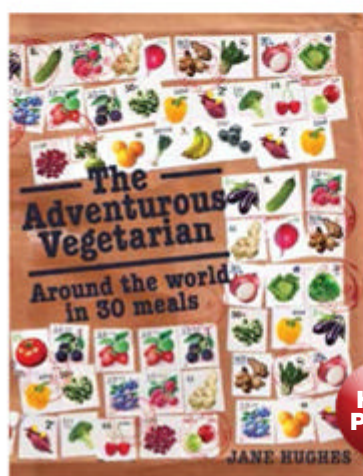
SMALL PLANET VEGETARIAN COOKBOOK

Price \$17.48

Code BSPK

Earth-friendly global recipes in mezze or tapas style. Delicious dishes with a whole array of different combinations to try. Hardback. Size: 25cm x 18cm. 256 pages.

HALF PRICE



THE ADVENTUROUS VEGETARIAN

Price \$14.98

Code BADV

30 countries; 30 sumptuous menus offering everything you need to give your friends and family a taste of how other vegetarians eat. Written by the editor of the UK Vegetarian Society in collaboration with groups all over the world.

Photography throughout. Hardback.

Size: 25cm x 18cm. 296 pages.

HALF PRICE



BABA DIDI AND THE GODWITS FLY

Price \$9.95

Code BBAB

The enchanting story of a fantastical flight, and of the courage and endurance it takes for birds – and people – to keep going to reach a safe destination. A beautifully illustrated story for children aged 4-9. The book has a foreword by Helen Clark, the former NZ prime minister who is now head of the UN Development Programme. Royalties support UNICEF. Hardback. Size: 27cm x 21cm. 28 pages.



RAINBOW WARRIORS

Price \$19.95

Code BRAIN

Rainbow Warriors is written by a long-serving Greenpeace activist and tells stories of life on board the Esperanza, the Arctic Sunrise and, of course, the Rainbow Warrior itself. It gives the inside story to some of the ships' most exciting adventures, including the recent plight of the Arctic 30. Paperback.

Size 18cm x 23.5cm. 248 pages.



JULIANA'S BANANAS

Price \$11.95

Code BBAN

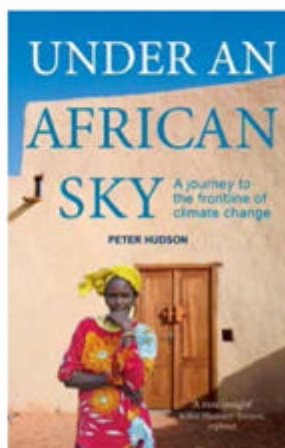
Follow the story of Juliana and her children to learn how the Windward Islands' fairtrade bananas are grown and transported to our shelves. Packed with colourful illustrations and featuring lots of facts about fairtrade and some yummy banana recipes. Hardback. Size: 18cm x 22cm. 32 pages. Ages: 4-7.

Under An African Sky: A JOURNEY TO THE FRONTLINE OF CLIMATE CHANGE

Price \$16.95

Code BVILL

'Peter Hudson's lyrical book about the village (in Mauritania) he has been visiting for the last 20 years gives rare insight to the problem their brave people face' – Robin Hanbury-Tenison Paperback. Size: 22cm x 14cm. 240 pages.



ONE WORLD GREETINGS CARDS

Price \$12.95

Code 15CRD

Pack of ten cards, two each of five photographs selected from the New Internationalist One World Calendar. Size: 10.5cm x 21cm.

MORE CHOICES IN OUR WEB SHOP

NEW INTERNATIONALIST

THE NEW INTERNATIONALIST workers' co-operative exists to report on the issues of world poverty and inequality; to focus attention on the unjust relationship between the powerful and powerless worldwide; to debate and campaign for the radical changes necessary to meet the basic needs of all; and to bring to life the people, the ideas and the action in the fight for global justice.

The New Internationalist (NI) magazine was founded by Peter and Lesley Adamson in 1970. Together with a range of other publications it is published by New Internationalist Publications Ltd which is wholly owned by the New Internationalist Trust and co-operatively managed:
Accounts: Frank Syrratt.
Advertising: Michael York.
Administration: Anna Weston.
Design: Andrew Kokotka, Ian Nixon, Juha Sorsa.
Editorial (Magazine): Vanessa Baird, Dinyar Godrej, Jo Lateu, Hazel Healy, Chris Spannos, Jamie Kelsey-Fry, Cris Moisesco.
Editorial (Publications): Chris Brazier.
Mail Order: Bev Dawes, Emma Dunkley, James Rowland.
Marketing (Magazine): Amanda Synnott, Rob Norman, Alex Hambis.
North American Publisher: Ian McKelvie.
Marketing (Publications): Dan Raymond-Barker, Kelsi Farrington.
Production: Fran Harvey.
Web and IT: Charlie Harvey, Pete Stewart.
North America Publisher: Ian McKelvie.

SUBSCRIPTIONS

To update your subscription with address changes etc or to contact us with any other subscription queries:
Website: www.newint.org/subscriptions
You will need your subscriber reference number which is on the magazine address label.
Email: newint@cdsglobal.ca
Phone: 1-800-661-8700
Fax: 905-946-0410
Canada PO Box 819, Markham, ON L3P 8A2
US Box 1062, Niagara Falls, NY 14304-1062

SUBSCRIPTION PRICES

Canada: 1 year \$44 (plus GST or HST) Foreign (by air) 1 year \$70
GST 121784854 US: 1 year \$44 Foreign (by air) 1 year \$70

Subscribers in the UK, Ireland, Australia, New Zealand and Japan should contact their local subscriptions office whose addresses can be found at: www.newint.org/about/contact/

North American
Editorial Office
2446 Bank Street, Suite 653
Ottawa, ON K1V 1A8 Tel: 613-826-1319 Email: nican@newint.org

Advertising: Michael York Email: michael@emsm.org.uk

Permissions: Contact the editorial office. Member of Cancopy.
Reproduction of all material in New Internationalist, excluding photographs, is free to primary and secondary schools.

NEWSSTAND DISTRIBUTOR: Natalie Dalton, Disticor Direct,
ndalton@disticor.com
Publications Mail Agreement number 40063336. Return undeliverable Canadian addresses to Circulation Department, NI Magazine, PO Box 819, Markham, ON L3P 8A2.

US periodicals postage paid at Niagara Falls, NY (USPS 329-770). US office of publication: 2421 Hyde Park Blvd, Niagara Falls, NY 14305.

US postmaster: send address changes to NI Magazine, PO Box 1062, Niagara Falls, NY 14304.

Indexing: Indexed in the Canadian Periodical Index Quarterly (CPIQ), Canadian Business and Current Affairs and the Alternative Press Index. Available in full-text electronic format from EBSCO and Proquest.

The New Internationalist is published monthly except that the Jan/Feb and July/Aug issues are combined.



@newint



facebook.com/newint

It helps us occasionally to allow carefully screened organizations to mail our subscribers. If you do not wish to receive their material please write to your subscription office.

© New Internationalist Publications Ltd. 2015
ISSN 0305-9529

ISO accreditation 9001-2008



Seeking other paths



This month's *Big Story* is a much-abbreviated version of my book

*SOS: Alternatives to Capitalism.**

Why SOS? SOS is, of course, a nautical term sent out by ships in distress meaning Save Our Souls. The title of this book adapts this to Save Our Species. And that, I believe, is what is at stake. Not next year perhaps, or even next decade, but certainly in the foreseeable future we are heading socially and ecologically down a slippery slope – the bottom of which promises a very hard landing. The main villain of the piece is our current system which is committed to runaway growth based on ecological destruction and levels of social inequality unimaginable just 30 or 40 years ago. SOS is an attempt to help us put on the brakes and show we have other options.

The purpose of this magazine – and the book from which it is drawn – is to tease out what such genuine alternatives to capitalism might look like. It looks at what the past experience of such alternatives has been, at the issues and problems that have haunted them – and some of the paths not taken. This is a bittersweet history of rich diversity marked by massacre, noble failure and tepid success. SOS then moves into the present to suggest ways out of the maze of life-threatening inequality and eco-catastrophe.

Elsewhere in the issue, we meet Masih Alinejad, the Iranian women's rights campaigner making waves through social media; and Susana Baca, an award-winning singer-songwriter championing her marginalized Afro-Peruvian community. ■

RICHARD SWIFT

For the New Internationalist Co-operative
newint.org

* Special offers on book and e-book. See nin.tl/SOSoffer

This month's contributors include:



Volker Straeter has been working internationally as an illustrator since 1988. Now based in Germany, he has lived in Spain and England (where he studied at St Martin's School of Art). His work is highly conceptual and the images often carry multi-layered messages.



Jo Eckersley is a freelance journalist from Britain. Six months ago she moved to Sri Lanka's sunny capital city, Colombo. She has lived in four other cities over the past five years, and used these experiences to inform writing on politics, culture and travel.



Diane Ghogomu is a North American artist and educator who currently lives in Buenos Aires, Argentina. With grants from Fulbright and The Harvard Hip-Hop Archive, she co-directed, filmed and produced a documentary called *Buenos Aires Rap* (2014).

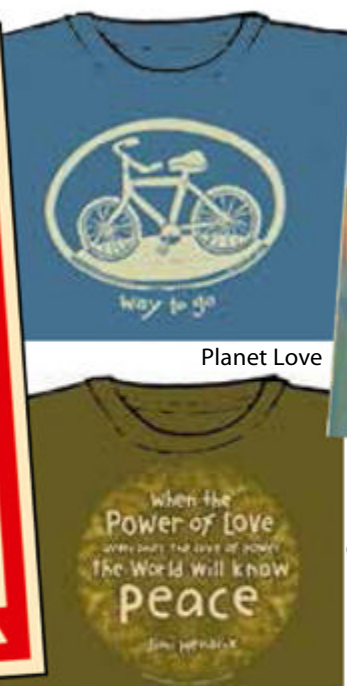


Robin Llewellyn is a freelance journalist from Darowen, Wales. Pictured here on assignment in rural Colombia, he has reported on human rights in Latin America for the *Guardian*, *The Ecologist*, *The Economist*, and *Le Monde Diplomatique*.

Shepard Fairey



Poster, T-shirt, Note & Postcard



Organic cotton sweatshop free T-shirts



One of our **BEST SELLERS!**
Greetings And Thanks To The Natural World
 Accordion Poster
 4.25x53" long with string for hanging.
 Eleven panels, three shown.



Visa, MC
Discover

SyracuseCulturalWorkers.com

800.949.5139

Box 6367 • Syracuse, NY • 13217 • USA



SAY NO TO WAR
 Join the Anglican Communion's movement for peace.

Anglican Pacifist Fellowship
enquiries@anglicanpeacemaker.org.uk
 11 Weavers End, Hanslope, Milton Keynes, MK19 7PA, UK
 Tel: 01908510642. (a registered charity)
 New Zealand: APF, <http://www.converge.org.nz/pma/apf>
 USA: Episcopal Peace Fellowship, <http://epfnational.org/>

Latest Book: Subversive Peacemakers by Clive Barrett. £10 via website www.anglicanpeacemaker.org.uk
 Peace grants available. Apply office@anglicanpacifists.com

EMSM
 Ethical Media Sales and Marketing

To advertise here get in touch with Michael at EMSM

michael@emsm.org.uk
 01865 403339
 0141 9468708
 07780 874279
www.emsm.org.uk

Postgraduate Courses for Changing Lives

Ecological Food Systems
 MSc, PG Dip, PG Cert

Economics For Transition
 MA, PG Cert

Ecological Design
 MA, PC Cert

Holistic Science
 MSc, PG Cert

Schumacher College
 In Partnership with Plymouth University

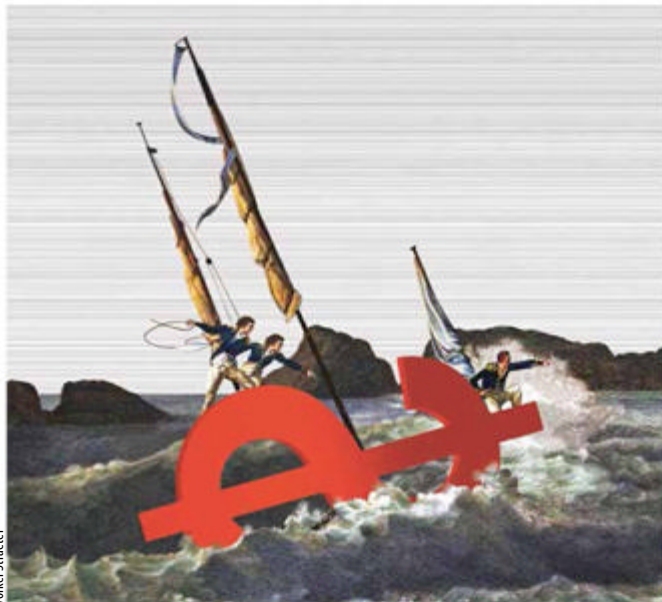
www.schumachercollege.org.uk

Agenda

Stories making the news this month

- 8 Colombia: resistance is fatal
 - 8 Rana Plaza victory in Bangladesh
 - 9 Stop forced closures in Australia
 - 9 Introducing Julius Malema
 - 9 Crack a squat for migrants in Greece
 - 10 Peruvian monkey puzzle solved
 - 10 Drift away from pacifism in Japan
 - 11 Norway's divestment glory
 - 11 And the worst TNC in New Zealand is...
- PLUS: *Scratchy Lines* by cartoonist **Simon Kneebone** and **Reasons to be Cheerful**.

The Big Story – Alternatives to capitalism



- 12 **Capitalism's stormy sea**
Richard Swift begins his journey through the alternatives to capitalism by looking at the nature of the beast they seek to oppose.
- 14 **The people's flag is deep and red**
How have socialism and social democracy worked as alternatives?
- 17 **The anarchist impulse**
Anarchism is rarely taken seriously but its libertarian principles are still vital.
- 20 **Eco-divide: this changes everything**
Why the environmental crisis is as much a challenge to the Left as it is to the Right.
- 22 **ENDGAME: the age-old struggle played out as chess.**
- 24 **Pathways & possibilities**
Utopianism of the spirit; a democratic commons; a continent turns left; a reciprocal economy.
- 29 **What should we stand for?**

Front cover: Andrew Kokotka.
Magazine designed by Andrew Kokotka and Juha Sorsa.
All monetary values are expressed in US dollars unless otherwise noted.

Features

38 King and country

Together, the monarchy and the military hold tightly to the reins of power in Thailand. With little sign of popular resistance, **Jo Eckersley** wonders if this is likely to change.

42 Safe but not free

Valeska Hovener and **Marielle van Uiter** hear how two Afghan women who have fled family abuse are learning to move on.

Mixed media

32 Film reviews

Toronto Hot Docs Festival special, including **They Will Have To Kill Us First**, directed by Johanna Schwartz; and **The Amina Profile**, directed by Sophie Deraspe.



34 Music reviews

The Iqrit Files by Checkpoint 303; and **Xáos** by Xáos.

35 Book reviews

The Kindness of Enemies by Leila Aboulela; **S.N.U.F.F.** by Victor Pelevin; and **Syria Burning** by Charles Glass.

36 Also out there...

PLUS: **Open Window** with guest cartoonist **Osama Hajjaj** from Jordan.

Opinion

37 Mark Engler

Hillary Clinton and the Vermonter socialist.

41 Chris Coltrane

The delicious taste of irony.

Regulars

6 Letters

Professing aethism; free speech; and banking hypocrisy.

7 Letter from Bangui

Money may be in short supply, but mangos are definitely not, discovers **Ruby Diamonde**.

30 Country Profile: Panama

44 Making Waves

Exiled Iranian journalist **Masih Alinejad** is using social media to challenge Iran's compulsory hijab law. **Lucinda Homa Gray** meets her.

45 Puzzle Page

PLUS: **Marc Roberts'** *Only Planet* cartoon.

46 And Finally

Diane Ghogomu talks to **Susana Baca**, the award-winning singer-songwriter who has dedicated her life to getting recognition for her marginalized Afro-Peruvian community.



Coming next month:

Syria – the stolen revolution

Praise, blame and all points in between? Give us your feedback.

The **New Internationalist** welcomes your letters. But please keep them short. They might be edited for purposes of space or clarity. Letters should be sent to letters@newint.org or to your local **NI** office. Please remember to include a town and country for your address.



Goodbye God

The article by Jonny Scaramanga (**NI 483**) reminded me of my own past and why I became an atheist. My mother, as a child, idly picked a leaf from a hedge to suck. When she reported the 'theft' in confession the priest, instead of saying that it was okay, told her to say five Hail Marys, a prayer for him and put a penny in the box! She then received absolution. She had also as a child watched her little sister die on the floor with a choking fit while their mother said: "tis God's will" and continued to fondle her rosary.

My sister was told that men were dirty, filthy creatures. She never married and died a virgin.

I have often wondered why, if they were telling the truth about our Maker, it was necessary to threaten everlasting burning as a punishment for non-belief, putting the fear of God into us.

I support Thomas Paine who wrote: 'All national institutions of churches, whether Jewish, Christian or Turkish, appear to me no other than human inventions, set up to terrify and enslave mankind and monopolize power and profit.'

I proudly profess my atheism even to Jehovah's Witnesses to save them the trouble of coming

down my driveway. They don't seem to mind, so I continue my gardening, being careful not to disturb the fairies.

Bill Glover Errington, Canada

Modern context

'Worshippers of the Almighty Invisible Hand' (**NI 483**) highlighted the need for the struggle to separate church from state to be repeated in the modern context. In the 21st century, our struggle has to be to separate corporation from state, as well as, of course, to eliminate the vast wealth disparities across the globe, and to hugely reduce humanity's greenhouse-gas emissions.

Paul Elwell-Sutton Haast, New Zealand/Aotearoa

Free speech and offence

In his letter (**NI 483**) criticizing myself and others for defending the use of free speech to cause offence, Daniel Hiest seems to be confusing 'rights' and 'manners'.

He asks: 'Since when have people been justified in... attacking someone else's beliefs and value systems and thinking that they can do this with impunity?'

Well, at least since 1948, when the United Nations agreed the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 19 of which states:

'Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers.'

If by 'impunity' Hiest means retaliation, then of course one should expect equally robust free expression in response; but if he literally means punishment, then that would certainly count as 'interference'.

It might be considered bad manners to disregard others' feelings by ridiculing their cherished beliefs but people do have the right to do so without facing death in response.

The key point is that there would be no motivation to offend another person's beliefs if they didn't try to impose those beliefs on others.

The *Charlie Hebdo* cartoonists chose to offend with words and drawings. The religious fundamentalists chose to offend with murder. There is no equivalence, despite Daniel Hiest's apologist's defence of cultural relativism.

Brian Quinn Knaresborough, England

Fellow traveller

David Ransom, right from the beginning you set me in a state of emotional glow (**NI 482**). I have no talent to make money either. I wasn't frogmarched at the beginning of the Uruguayan crisis, but when our union sent us on strike, it gave us instructions to avoid detention. I duly stuck to it, driving my jaded old car 300 kilometres on one occasion, to remain out of sight for a week. On 8 October 1969, however, I was with my fellow bank officers in Montevideo barracks under military rule, when the Tupas briefly seized the city of Pando. We were forced to work in the bank, taken back to the quarters for the night, early morning military instruction and so on, for nine days. I decided that this situation was becoming unfair to my wife and children. In 1971 on my 34th birthday we were all flying to Australia.

Your brilliant analysis of the bank boondoggle has amazed me with a depth I'd never come across. That is the beauty of **NI**, where you can poke right down into the crude reality of neoliberalism. I hear every day seemingly security-assuring political addresses telling the people that jobs will be created. Yes, probably out of thin air. The spiels are loaded with the level of hypocrisy needed to satisfy the unaware listeners, and the voracity of the upper end of town. I adhere to your optimism about dinosaurs and zombies that 'at some point, we will come to our senses. Then

the darkness of neoliberalism will disperse...'

Ariel Gallo Mount Garnet, Australia

The other half

In 'The House of Saud' (*Worldbeaters*, **NI 482**), you suggest the answer to why Western countries prostrate themselves before the Saudis is oil. You are half right. The other half is guns. Saudi Arabia is the world's biggest purchaser of arms – the leading customer for both the US and Britain. It appears that for guns and oil, the West will sell its soul.

Bill Longstaff Canada

West Papua's troubles

Thank you for again reporting on the violence in West Papua (*Agenda*, **NI 482**). However, since January 2015 the violence has increased.

One example. In March 2015, many West Papuans held fundraising events for Vanuatu after Cyclone Pam devastated much of that country. When fundraising was happening on the streets of Yahukimo, Indonesian police and soldiers opened fire. One person was killed, five shot, 26 tortured, 34 arrested and detained and one kidnapped.

Thousands of West Papuans have fled into the jungle and feel they cannot go back due to the presence of the Indonesian military and police. The Indonesians in Yahukimo have been provided with help from a disaster-management organization but the West Papuans have not.

This is only one instance. There are continual reports of violence against West Papuans committed by the Indonesian military and police.

It is time for world leaders and the UN to take notice and confront Indonesia over its treatment of people in West Papua. After more than 50 years the time has come for recognition of West Papua as a separate country.

Sannie Pritchard Brisbane, Australia

Correction

The *Agenda* article 'Awards for Bigots' (**NI 483**) was written by **Amy Hall** but was wrongly credited. Our apologies.

The views expressed on the letters page are not necessarily those of the **New Internationalist**.

Dirt cheap

A deceptive abundance in a season of golden fruit gives
RUBY DIAMONDE pause for thought.

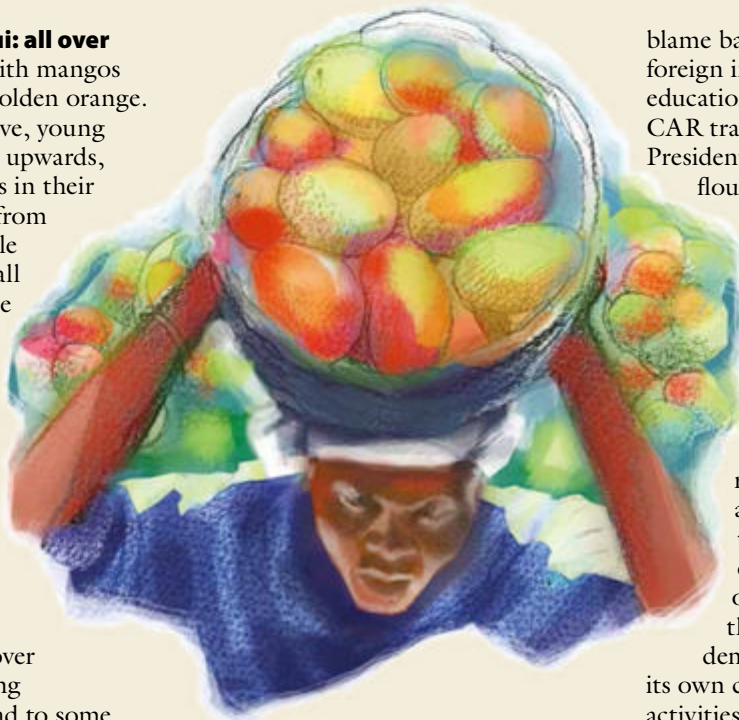
Mango season in Bangui: all over

the city trees are laden with mangos ripening from green to golden orange. Everywhere I walk or drive, young men and boys are gazing upwards, balancing very long sticks in their hands to knock mangos from the branches into the little *paniers* that look like small windsocks attached to the end. The air smells rich and fruity.

Many of the mangos in the Central African Republic are, literally, the fruits of foreign colonization. When the French colonized this region at the tail-end of the 19th century they zealously planted mango trees that still thrive all over the country today. Driving along mud-tracks that lead to some of the remotest villages in the CAR, maybe in the world, you will often find the village entrances lined with avenues of majestic mature mango trees, gifting precious shade from the searing sun.

I love mangos, and don't even need to buy them, because my garden is filled with mango trees. When I pick the ones that I can reach, they're sun-warm and perfect for eating. The women I usually buy fruit from at the central market are disappointed. 'Are your mangos really as good as these?' demands one woman, before leaning forward and, in a stage whisper, offering me 'an exceptionally good price *if* you buy the whole basket, Madam!'

Here in Bangui, women also walk the streets with large metal bowls filled to the brim with mangos balanced on their heads – despite the heat. The irony, for them and other local fruit traders, is that mangos are so plentiful here, they're dirt cheap. You can buy a bulging shopping bag filled with them for half a dollar. No-one is going to get rich selling mangos!



Money is in very short supply for the vast majority of Central Africans, who survive on just under \$1 a day (according to the World Bank). On the 2014 Global Prosperity Index, the Central African Republic ranked bottom out of 142 countries. One of the root causes of such chronic, ingrained poverty is that CAR exports almost nothing, except hardwood, raw cotton, waxes and small amounts of coffee. And these industries are still dominated by the few foreign companies that have stayed here throughout the years of political crises.

The other commodity that *is* exported, illegally, is diamonds. Despite the UN Kimberley Process that bans the export of so-called 'blood diamonds', these gemstones flow out of CAR via illegal businesses and rebel groups – the border is vast and barely guarded.

My Central African friends and collaborators often comment on the great irony of living in a country so rich in natural resources – and so fertile – yet still at the bottom of the global economic barrel. Usually they

blame bad domestic governance, foreign interference and lack of education in equal measure. The CAR transitional government, led by President Catherine Samba-Panza, has floundered in its efforts to revive

the economy of this land-locked country that shares borders with six different neighbours. It is also infested with small arms.

No wonder a recent 'National Public Consultation' initiated by the government identified redistribution of wealth and resources, including the wealth of politicians, as one of the major concerns of communities across the country. Respondents demanded the government tackle its own corruption, and monitor activities of foreigners working in CAR, including entrepreneurs and international aid organizations.

A foreign adviser to the CAR government tells me about what he calls 'the problem of two agendas'. The international community wants CAR to move towards national elections, because successful elections mean other countries can justify reducing their level of engagement here. But not all Central Africans want elections: some politicians, and rebel leaders, are making plenty of money from their positions and they want the status quo to be maintained as long as possible.

Given these tensions, there is a remarkable semblance of calm in much of Bangui. But it is a calm that can shatter easily because, as many Central Africans know to their cost, poor people are easily manipulated. Without a redistribution of wealth and resources, including education, in CAR the risks of further intercommunal violence are fermenting just below the surface. ■

Ruby Diamonde is a pseudonym.

COLOMBIA

Resistance is fatal

Last year, 116 environmentalists were murdered – almost double the number of journalists killed over the same period – according to a new report by Global Witness.

Land conflicts related to hydropower, mining and agribusiness caused the rising number of deaths. Latin America emerged as the most dangerous place for environmentalists, host to over three-quarters of killings; 40 per cent of victims were indigenous activists.

In Colombia – which saw 25 killings last year, second only to Brazil – indigenous Nasa people are seeking to recover land occupied by vast sugar plantations, to replant them with trees and traditional crops. They are now being violently opposed

by police and paramilitary groups.

In April, Nasa musician Carlos Garcia needed emergency surgery after being shot in the head by police, while protesting at the 'Emperatriz' plantation in Cauca province, western Colombia. Days later, youth activist Guillermo Paví was shot and killed at the same location.

'The sugar cane doesn't benefit the earth like the forests that once grew here,' explained Garcia, who is now in recovery. 'It just contaminates it with pesticides. This struggle is not just about us. It's about visions: that of a dignified Mother Earth, versus that of monoculture.'

Global Witness cautions that some killings will have gone unrecorded due to the remoteness of many communities subject to land conflicts. ■

Robin Llewellyn



Police attack indigenous protesters at the 'Emperatriz' plantation where an activist was killed last April.

Robin Llewellyn

BANGLADESH

Rana Plaza

In a rare victory for workers' rights, all those affected by the collapse of the Rana Plaza garment factory in 2013 will receive full compensation for loss of income and medical care.

The Rana Plaza Donors Trust Fund – set up by the International Labour Organization in January 2014 to collect compensation for victims and their families – reached its funding target of \$30 million in June, with a final, large, anonymous donation.

'This compensation will help each person to sustain their lives – enabling some to continue to send their kids to school, and at the very least, now no-one will starve,' said Kalpona Akter, Executive Director of the Bangladesh Centre for Worker Solidarity.

The collapse of the Rana Plaza

building in April 2013 was the worst industrial accident in the history of the garment industry, killing over 1,000 workers, many of whom were making clothes for Western retailers.

Compensation did not come without a fight. Brands such as Matalan only donated an undisclosed payment to the Fund after a campaign by British online pressure group 38 Degrees; Benetton was nudged into coughing up \$1.1 million by campaigners Avaaz's one-million-strong petition. A global day of action two years after the disaster pushed brands to bring the fund within \$2.4 million of its target. These stand-out moments were built on the sustained efforts of a select few in Bangladesh and Western partners outside.

This campaign victory is ground-breaking, with far wider implications beyond addressing the immediate needs of the Rana Plaza victims. The

first ever compensation scheme to be created and implemented for the victims of a large supply-chain disaster, it will bolster future efforts to hold brands and retailers to account. ■

Ilona Kelly
labourbehindthelabel.org

30 years ago (and 35, and 20)...



It is no coincidence that the July and August magazines in 1980 were about women and feminism respectively, or that the same was true for the July and August issues in 1985, or that we returned to the territory in July 1995. These dates coincided with major United



AUSTRALIA

Stop forced closures

Aboriginal people in Western Australia are leading a movement to protect their remote homeland communities. Over 100 are threatened with closure, deemed 'unviable' by state governments keen to slash costly services, such as electricity.

One of the groups heading up the campaign is Stop the Forced Closure of Aboriginal Communities in Australia, also known as SOS Blak Australia (many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander activists prefer the spelling 'blak'.)

Led by women from the Kimberley region, rallies took place across Australia in March after Prime Minister Tony Abbott said the government could not 'endlessly subsidize lifestyle choices' of remote communities. In May, tens of thousands demonstrated across the country, as well as in Canada, Britain and New Zealand, Aotearoa.

'It's become about much more than community closures,' says Mitch Torres of SOS Blak Australia. 'It's about children being taken away, the stolen generation being continued, the high incarceration rates of blak men.'

Aboriginal communities do better, in every way, when they remain on their homelands, according to research by Amnesty Australia. Torres insists that the way forward is 'to find holistic solutions that make communities successful and thriving, safe for children and families.' ■

Amy Hall

Nations women's conferences – there was Copenhagen in 1980, Nairobi in 1985 and Beijing in 1995.

It is hard to convey how important the early UN conferences felt at the time. For the first decade of the **NI**'s existence there was a general sense of optimism about what could be achieved through the UN system, and this would be regularly reflected in our pages. The UN system itself now has less confidence in the power of its conferences to bring about meaningful change and they are widely seen as little more than talking shops.

Introducing...

Julius Malema

The rise of Julius Malema and his Economic Freedom Fighters party (EFF) speaks to the desperation of poor South Africans who continue to live under economic apartheid long after the political variant left the scene. Malema is a recognizable type in South African politics – a fire-breathing populist who combines 'concern' for the poor with a big ego and a penchant for feathering his own nest.

Malema started his political career in the African National Congress (ANC) youth wing, but his talent for courting controversy – championing the authoritarianism of Zimbabwe's Robert Mugabe and attacking journalists critical of his own limo lifestyle – got him expelled.

Malema has been able to maintain a certain popularity. His newly formed EFF won 25 seats in the 2014 elections, largely by pointing out the ANC's complicity in such issues as the massacre

of striking miners and its general support for the priorities of corporate South Africa. Yet while Malema has

called for the nationalization of mines, his own fortune has been connected to the outsourcing of public services in his native Limpopo. And he is currently under investigation for fraud, corruption, money-laundering and tax evasion.

Still, it would be a mistake to see Malema as simply a hypocrite. He has proved an effective parliamentarian, holding President Zuma to account for everything from corruption to the xenophobic riots against migrants that periodically erupt in the country. Can poor South Africans find a way to move beyond this charismatic lightning-rod to build a popular alternative to an increasingly out-of-touch ANC? ■

Richard Swift



Epa/Nic Bothma

GREECE

Crack a squat for migrants

Greece has long been plagued by accusations that it treats asylum seekers inhumanely. Children are forced to live in unsanitary detention centres and migrant destitution is rife. Racist violence has soared with the rise of fascist party Golden Dawn.

However, an alternative narrative of solidarity is also being written. Across Athens, ordinary people are setting up shelters and support networks to

create safe, supportive environments for migrants who have fled to Greece to escape war-torn countries, the vast majority from Syria.

Squatters have fixed up two such 'solidarity shelters' in Athens' eastern district of Zografou. Moved to action by the plight of Syrian refugees, the group currently supports two families, one Syrian and one Iranian, in abandoned properties in the area. They hold weekly solidarity meetings in another local squat, 'Mperdes', to discuss fundraising, distribution and legal support.

As the movement grows, it is becoming more ambitious. An informal network of volunteers now includes lawyers, interpreters and advocates.

Moreover, there are tentative signs of the government adopting a more progressive approach on immigration. Syriza, sticking to its pre-election rhetoric, has recently laid out plans to close detention centres. Although such measures face opposition in a society deeply divided over immigration, there is real hope that Greece's image as Europe's pariah state for migrant rights may soon be out of date. ■

Lewis Garland

Who is Geert Wilders?



Burma's Rohingya – the invisible people

The Maggi affair



PERU

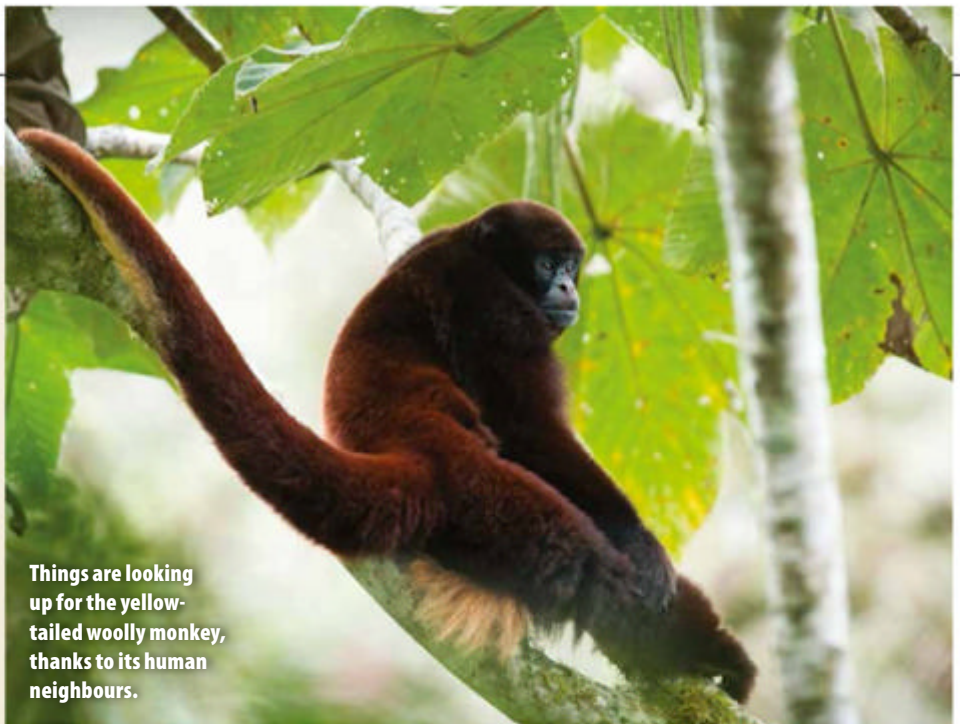
Monkey puzzle solved

A critically endangered species of monkey is flourishing, thanks to the combined efforts of local communities and a conservation charity in Peru.

Neotropical Primate Conservation (NPC) has worked in Yambrasbamba to protect the yellow-tailed woolly monkey, which was facing extinction, since 2007. In the last five years, the monkey population has risen 30 per cent. The charity puts its success down to the partnerships it has forged with local villagers, who have pledged to control hunting and forest clearance.

'Local people understand environmental problems from their own first-hand experiences,' says Noga Shaneé, co-founder of the small charity. 'They are putting in a huge amount of effort, spending the little money they have, and even risking their own lives to conserve their forests and the yellow-tailed woolly monkey, because they find it the right and moral thing to do.'

'Conservation priorities are often dictated by large NGOs



Things are looking up for the yellow-tailed woolly monkey, thanks to its human neighbours.

with huge funds that are largely used to cover offices and staff, but in many cases maintain little connection with, or understanding of, conservation problems in their local context,' she explains. 'If we really want to preserve the world's dying biodiversity, we must aspire to a much more egalitarian and efficient conservation, through smaller on-the-ground projects.' ■

Jess Worth

Andrew Walmsley

JAPAN

Drift away from pacifism

The 70th anniversary of the Japanese surrender that ended the Second World War will be marked on 15 August. At a time when nationalism is high and trust is low between Japan and

its Asian neighbours, anniversary commemorations threaten to exacerbate existing regional tensions.

Since returning to office in December 2012, Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe has evaded acknowledging Japan's responsibility for its wartime aggression in Asia.

Many nations obfuscate their murky pasts, but Abe is systematically undermining the apologetic sentiments that Japanese leaders have expressed since the mid-1990s.

Within Japan, Abe is under pressure to use this year's anniversary to reiterate Prime Minister Murayama's 1995 official apology for the war which condemns Japan's 'self-righteous nationalism', 'colonial rule' and 'aggression'. But Abe has long campaigned for a less apologetic stance, characterizing the prevailing narrative as masochistic and damaging to national pride.

Consequently, Abe's government is whitewashing domestic representations of Japanese history and forcing school textbook publishers to follow new guidelines promoting patriotic education. The Osaka International Peace Museum, famed for its exhibits showing Japanese wartime aggression, has recently removed them under pressure from conservative politicians. Journalists and academics exposing the government's misrepresentation of history face harassment and smears.

Abe has also opened an assault on Japan's post-War legacy of pacifism. In July 2014, his cabinet decided to allow Japan's Self Defence Forces (SDF) to

Scratchy Lines by Simon Kneebone



Reasons to be cheerful

NORWAY

Divestment glory

Climate campaigners were high-fiving all over the world in June when they learned that Norway will divest its sovereign wealth fund from coal, the largest fossil-fuel divestment commitment secured to date.

The Norwegian parliament voted unanimously to divest a staggering \$8.8 billion from the mining and burning of coal – the most polluting fossil fuel – on 5 June.

A coalition of civil-society organizations hailed the decision as a critical first step, which bodes well for the upcoming climate talks in Paris next December.

The UN-backed 'Fossil Free' campaign aims to convince investors that they should sell carbon-intensive stocks because reserves of coal, oil and gas are many times greater than could be safely burned.

In just three years, the campaign has persuaded major institutions, such as French insurance firm Axa, which dumped over half a million dollars of

coal-blackened investments in June, Stanford University and the Church of England as well as hundreds of pension funds, states and city councils, to go fossil-fuel free.

Norway's Government Pension Fund Global (GPF) will withdraw funds from an estimated 122 companies that derive more than 30 per cent of their income from coal by 1 January 2016.

While keen to celebrate Norway's decision, campaigners are not blind to the fact that its \$900-billion fund was created by other fossil fuels – exporting oil and gas extracted from the North Sea.

'The moral compass guiding Norway's investments must be put to use to keep the country's fossil-fuel reserves in the ground,' said Nicolò Wojewoda from 350.org, the driving force behind the international divestment movement. 'Coal is the dirtiest source of emissions, but oil and gas are no solutions to the climate crisis.'

'With King Coal falling from its throne, we are all more inspired to go after big oil and gas.' ■

Hazel Healy



Tree(s) are the champions

Ecuador has broken the Guinness World Record for reforestation. Last May, 44,883 people planted 647,250 trees in a single day. The government-sponsored event aimed to highlight Ecuador's environmental commitments, which include halving the country's formerly terrifying annual deforestation rate. Let's hope Quito stops allowing corporations to mine and drill beneath the Amazon next.

Mayor for the 99 per cent

The new boss of Barcelona, Ada Colau, is an anti-austerity feminist. As the first of the *indignados* – Spain's Occupy movement – to be elected, pictures immediately went viral of her being arrested for blockading a bank. Wasting no time, the new mayor announced she would slash her own salary by 80 per cent, stop evictions of tenants unable to pay their rent and force banks to open up unoccupied buildings for housing.



engage in battles to protect Japan's allies – a policy known as 'collective self-defence' – that was previously banned.

Increasing defence spending is another sign that Japan is pulling away from its pacifist moorings. Amid growing alarm over assertive Chinese claims on Japanese territory, the government lifted a self-imposed weapons export ban last April. Then, in May, Japan hosted its first international arms exhibition since the Second World War, organized by British security company MAST. The arms fair coincided with the adoption of two bills by Abe's cabinet to ease the deployment of the SDF overseas. Parliament is expected to pass both bills this summer.

Abe's defence moves are being cheered on by the US, which has long pushed Japan to take more responsibility for its domestic and regional security. But Japan's reinvigorated security role enjoys little domestic support, with only 23 per cent in favour of expansion and 68 per cent opposed to it. As Asia prepares to mark the end of the Second World War, it is unfortunate that a prime minister so unrepresentative of the pacifist majority will represent Japan. ■

Tina Burrett

NEW ZEALAND/ AOTEAROA

And the worst TNC is...

New Zealand's largest bank, ANZ, has been voted the 'worst transnational corporation' operating in the country.

Judges of the irreverent 'Roger Award' said: 'ANZ epitomizes the ugly face of modern finance, weakening the national economy... dodging tax at every opportunity... and dumping on its staff.'

ANZ clashed repeatedly with employees in 2014 over pay and conditions. CEO David Hisco enjoyed a 14-per-cent pay rise to become the highest-paid exec in New Zealand, on \$2.97 million – over 120 times more than the bank's lowest-paid workers.

Roger's judges – a group of academics, activists and trade unionists – used criteria that included economic dominance, political interference and 'gut feeling' to come up with a shortlist of misbehaving firms. Other finalists for 2014 include British American Tobacco NZ, Coca-Cola Amatil, Insurance Australia Group and Rio Tinto.

Set up in 1997, the Roger Award for the Worst Transnational Corporation Operating in New Zealand is run by Campaign against Foreign Control of Aotearoa and GATT Watchdog. ■

Waste not...

France has made it illegal for supermarkets to throw away unsold food, which must now be given to charities or used as animal feed. The law aims to halve France's annual food waste – 7.1 million tonnes – by 2025. Britain remains the EU's worst offender, with 12 million tonnes chucked out every year.



FGM outlawed

Nigeria has taken a step towards eradicating female genital mutilation (FGM), by banning the practice throughout the country. Nigeria accounts for a quarter of all FGM cases, according to UNICEF. Although more work needs to be done, the new law is a positive change, say campaigners.



Capitalism's stormy sea

RICHARD SWIFT begins his journey through political alternatives to capitalism by looking at the nature of the beast they seek to oppose.

Capitalism as a total world system is a relatively new part of human experience. It has its roots in the 16th and 17th centuries, which means that it has been around for four or five hundred years at most, while we humans (*Homo Sapiens*) have been around for 200,000 years, reaching anatomical maturity some 50,000 years ago. Our ancestors (the less predatory *Homo Erectus*) go back over a million years. By these measures capitalism is merely the blink of an eye.

Yet for most people living today this short time span is difficult to grasp. Partly this is because we have no relatives that remember pre-capitalism, and the oral tradition that used to pass historical knowledge from generation to generation has largely been disrupted by first literate and then media culture. There have been so many rapid technological changes over the past century that they add up to a kind of rupture in human memory. We have become future-oriented, addicted to novelty and 'into' discovering (and possessing) the latest thing in our rootless consumer universe.

The commons played a large role in both

economy and society all through the experience of pre-capitalist societies of various types – the commons being a shared resource from which each had the right to draw their livelihood, even if this livelihood was unequally shared under feudal conditions. The health of the commons – pasture land, gardens, woodland, water supply – was the concern of all. Economy was, as the social theorist Karl Polanyi has so brilliantly analysed, 'socially embedded' in such societies and subject to the prevailing values of that particular society rather than the kind of all-determining external force it has become under capitalism.¹

As market relations began to disentangle the economic from the social and cultural, ever fewer human checks remained to slow down or redirect the disembodied drive for profit. Today we experience the economy as a kind of out-of-control external force disconnected from human will. We speak of the stock market, for example, as if it is a living person – sometimes confident, sometimes jittery, feeling robust, suffering an attack of nerves and so on; a kind of Old Testament Mammon god.



All illustrations for Alternatives to Capitalism by Volker Straeter unless otherwise marked

We speak of the stock market, for example, as if it is a living person – sometimes confident, sometimes jittery, feeling robust, suffering an attack of nerves and so on; a kind of Old Testament Mammon god

Those who want to transform or even just tinker with our current system of corporate capitalism are confronted with a formidable task. What we face is something very far from the much discussed ‘level playing field’ that is supposed to characterize democratic competition. Those who want change by and large have little wealth. Those who wish to defend capitalism, by contrast, have a great deal of it and they have become expert at using their wealth to shape the political process to get what they want. Money and power are by now so closely linked together that it is discouraging even to contemplate how it could be otherwise.

The result is that ‘politics’ (how we organize our affairs) has become such a dirty word that people eschew even such minimal public involvements as casting their ballots. There is, moreover, an unspoken but widely held view on the political Right that vote suppression (actively finding ways to discourage people from voting) is a legitimate tool in the political war chest.

Creative destruction

One of the features of capitalism that has enabled it to survive is its ability both to create and to take advantage of its economic crises. This phenomenon was investigated and systematized by the political economist Joseph Schumpeter, who referred to it as a tendency for ‘creative destruction’. Schumpeter saw this underlying attribute as a kind of positive resilience that keeps capitalism from collapsing under the weight of its own contradictions.

For centuries, its opponents have looked to such crises as a source of hope, believing that the beast had finally overstepped the mark and could be brought to ground. These booms and busts are not new but have supplied the rhythm of the deployment of capital from the 16th century onwards, destabilizing people’s lives through the enclosure of the commons, the expansion of empires, and the shift of industry from less profitable to more profitable regions.

This destabilizing effect has always been a major source of the dissatisfaction with capitalism. It has inspired people to search for alternatives that provide a more balanced and stable form of existence, where they can count on regular access to the fundamentals of their survival – food and shelter, peace and community. Capitalism constantly puts these things at risk in its restless search for new avenues of profitable growth.

Those who, for moral, economic or political reasons, are opposed to the insecurity, inequality and egoism that seem inevitable consequences of the capitalist way of operating do, however, face a significant uphill challenge. Not only has capitalism shown great resilience in overcoming the periodic crises it has faced but it has also even been embraced by its one-time ideological opponents: state socialism in

China and the countries of the former Soviet bloc. These societies have now surrendered to the market as the most effective economic driver of future development.

Today, most of the public economies of such countries have come under the sway of private capital – much of it foreign. China, in particular, has become ‘the workshop of the world’, with its labour force working under extremely exploitative conditions within a political system that still proclaims itself communist. Yet dissenting activities still go on. ‘Mass incidents’ of labour unrest in China rose from 70,000 in 2004 to 180,000 in 2010 with virtually every economic sector affected.² This has led some to identify contemporary China as ‘the epicentre of global labour unrest’.³ It is certainly one of the ironies of the modern world that what remains of this failed experiment in communism is being used to undermine the struggles of workers for a better life.

Our current phase of capitalism is underpinned by a much named but too little understood political philosophy called neoliberalism. Usually this is a phrase used by critics rather than proponents of capitalism. Neoliberalism is a project that reduces all human activities to ‘homo economicus’ and takes in almost every sphere of life, from criminal justice to immigration. It has become a sort of moral-rearmament political doctrine to accompany the market fundamentalism of economic policy.

In these highly individualized economic circumstances, it is not surprising that the slogan that has become most popular with panicky voters during repeated election cycles is: ‘it’s the economy, stupid’. This captures the limits of government possibility as seen through neoliberal eyes – no room for compassion, intergenerational consideration, concern about the planet, international responsibility or democracy beyond the narrow confines of elections. There is simply no meaning outside the cold calculus of the market.

This is now starting to undermine the institutions with which the establishment has traditionally been identified – the legal system, the police, parliament, local government. Under earlier forms of liberal democracy these could be counted on to play a moderately autonomous role in tempering capitalism. Under neoliberalism they are increasingly shaped so that they will not be obstacles to market priorities. Neoliberalism redefines democracy as a kind of market rationality – and the only criterion to judge our political class by is how successful they are in ‘marketizing’ human relationships. This makes for difficult terrain on which alternatives to capitalism must be built. ■

¹ Karl Polanyi, *The Great Transformation*, Beacon Press, Boston, 1944. ² Bob McGuire, newsandletters.org Jan/Feb 2012. ³ H Hung (ed), *China and the Transformation of Global Capitalism*, Johns Hopkins, Baltimore, 2009.



The people's flag is deep and red

From Karl Marx to Ed Miliband and François Hollande is a very long journey indeed. But all at least pay lip-service to socialism. So how has it worked as an alternative?

Socialism organized through the state has been the main way in which humanity has tried to build an alternative to capitalism. We now have a couple of centuries of experience of this so it should be possible to draw up a balance sheet of positives and negatives. From the beginning, the state – or, if not the actually existing state, some idealized version of its socialist reformation – has been for most socialists a source of coherence and justice in opposition to the squalour and instability of the capitalist market. While there have been competing currents of leftist opinion, it is this notion of a rational state as opposed to an irrational market that has until recently carried the day. This is the background needed for any understanding of what has been a largely uncritical view of the potential of the state to install and oversee a socialist alternative. The legitimacy of the political state and the way it exercises power remains one of the Left's major intellectual blind spots.

Back in the 19th century the goal of a socialist republic was, for movements of the Left, just the logical conclusion of the democratic dream. Socialist theorists were increasingly aware that capitalism threatened the idea of a fully evolved democracy. Among their most treasured goals was the expansion of the franchise, given that the vote was then restricted largely to males with property. The main alternative in which those opposed to the system invested their hopes was a socialism brought about in one way or another through the democratic transformation of the state. In those days no-one doubted that the triumph of socialism meant more, not less, democracy. Opponents of socialism were staunchly opposed to such an expansion of democracy, seeing it as a form of threatening mob rule.

Along with other pioneers of socialism, Karl Marx saw the state as the fulcrum that could leverage a fundamental redirection of economic life. Marx, though, had very ambivalent feelings about the state. He thought of it as a transitional phase in the achievement of a stateless form of communism based on the democratic self-rule of producers. He was deeply suspicious of the bourgeois form

of the state and saw a radical democratic transformation of it as a necessary precursor to socialism – hence his enthusiasm for the direct democracy of the Paris Commune of 1871.

But in his writings on the state Marx chose to use the unfortunate phrase 'the dictatorship of the proletariat' to describe this transitional phase. The word 'dictatorship' had a far different and more limited definition in the 19th century than it has today. It meant a kind of directed control that would resist the challenges of the partisans of capitalism (particularly those that profited from the private control of the means of production) to reverse what Marx saw as a primarily democratic transition. But Marxism (not unlike the Bible and the Qur'an) can and has been used to support many different and competing viewpoints and interests. This is certainly true of the notion of 'the dictatorship of the proletariat' that was picked up by Lenin and his Bolsheviks (and too many others) to justify whatever draconian police-state measures they deemed necessary to protect their notion of socialism.

This blind spot about using state power to install socialism from above is common in different ways to the social democratic as well as the communist Left, and it has proved the undoing of the socialist hopes that were so strong in the 19th century. It has been consistently challenged by the advocates of change from below, be they anarchists or other libertarians of the Left. The debate has waxed and waned over the course of the last two centuries, with the 'practical' advocates of state power holding the upper hand for most of the time. However, the notion of an alternative from below has never entirely disappeared and, given the eclipse of the Leninist ethos and politics embedded in the communist world, it has become again the principal source of opposition to the tepid reformism of the centre-left tradition.

Communism and social democracy

Few would today disagree that over-reliance on a centralized state played a key role in the undoing of both the politics and economics of



The Centre-Left remains trapped in a parliamentary political culture where achieving snail-like incremental reforms is the cause of much self-congratulation



orthodox communism. The consequence was an alternative to capitalism that was decidedly unattractive, as it squeezed popular democracy and personal freedom while at the same time failing to deliver on the promise of economic prosperity. A highly centralized planning mechanism undermined any effective feedback from below on which to base decisions as to what and how much to produce.

The result was a combination of shortages and oversupply that became a notorious feature plaguing state communist economies. The system was able to achieve a forced-march industrialization that enabled first the Soviet Union (and, much later, China) to survive in the face of aggression from Hitler's fascism and other enemies. A certain level of initial equality and security in daily life was eventually undermined by a growth in popular aspirations for a freer life with a wider range of opportunity and economic possibility.

These systems have now been transformed back into a kind of autocratic capitalism where economic growth (spectacular in the Chinese case) has replaced stagnation but at the cost of galloping inequality. The usual, if limited, political freedoms associated with 'advanced' capitalism remain atrophied under these new forms of state capitalism. Undoubted advances in the general level of prosperity have not been accompanied by an opening up of the rights to assembly and independent organization that would allow trade unions and social movements to resist exploitation and inequality effectively. The ideological glue that sustains Russia and China is no longer some communist ideal of equality or producer self-rule but instead Great Power nationalism and individual self-enrichment.

The other strain of state socialism that has competed with orthodox communism is that of social democracy. This form of moderate socialism gradually separated itself from the (mostly European) revolutionary movements as it became a significant parliamentary force in the latter part of the 19th century. The divisions on the Left were less about democracy than about the speed and scope of the necessary changes, and about whether tactics should involve direct action by popular movements or be restricted to elected representatives of the working-class movement fighting for reform in parliaments. But gradually the Centre-Left learned that the simplest road to electoral success was to cohabit with the power of capital rather than mount a direct challenge to it. On such major



This blind spot about using state power to install socialism from above is common in different ways to the social democratic as well as the communist Left



questions as a militarized foreign policy, free trade, the rights of corporations, a significant redistribution of wealth, prioritizing growth over the environment and the overweening power of the national security state – the Centre-Left and the Centre-Right have broadly come to agree.

Capital's modernizers

Today's centre-left parties vary greatly. Few have gone (at least publicly) as far as Britain's New Labour in their complete commitment to capitalist modernity. It is fair to say, however, that almost all now present themselves in one way or another as modernizers of capitalism rather than as positing an alternative to it. Their aim is to shave off the rough edges by making the system fairer and better thought-out. They underestimate the power of corporate actors to manipulate and undermine whatever 'rules-based' economy they envision; they underestimate the essential irrationality and instability on which this 'most radical of all social systems' thrives; and they underestimate the sheer inertia in the very structure of the state – a kind of in-built conservative bias that derails their chosen vehicle of reform. They also ignore the myriad ways in which the state is tied into the capitalist power structure – or else simply accept these as the inevitable price of political realism.

Achieving high government office becomes a question of compromise and careers. It tends to trap the Centre-Left into managing the fundamentally undemocratic structures (including the security apparatus) of government, and this sucks all the oxygen out of any remaining social vision. The state in an advanced capitalist society is hemmed in by the sheer weight of the corporate economy on which it depends for the fundamentals of economic wellbeing: growth, taxes and jobs. This gives the corporate elite serious weight (often presented as a subtle form of blackmail) when it comes to blocking any kind of alternative – or even regulatory tinkering that would threaten corporate power and prerogatives.

Only a radical government with a significant counterweight rooted in society has any hope of facing down such forces. But instead of building this kind of counterweight, the Centre-Left remains trapped in a parliamentary political culture where achieving snail-like incremental reforms is the cause of much self-congratulation. The very things that it criticizes elsewhere in the political culture – hierarchy, short-sightedness, a politics tuned to the news cycle, leadership through personality rather than programme – also shapes its own behaviour. Building the counterweight is then left to the social movements and ecological projects whose vision is not atrophied by this self-defeating form of compromise. ■

The anarchist impulse

The other great historic alternative to capitalism has been anarchism. Often dismissed as a dirty word, its influence ebbs and flows but its libertarian principles remain profoundly influential.

Traditional socialism's great competitor in both thought and deed amongst those seeking a way out of capitalism has been the anarchism that first bloomed as a political theory in the 19th century. But the desire not to be subject to the arbitrary authority of others and to captain your own ship is as old as recorded memory.

Capitalism has used this universal desire to cloak itself in a libertarian guise by proclaiming that the freedom of the market is the only realistic way to achieve this more general liberty. But this cloak quickly shreds for most people as the growth of corporate monopoly usurps economic and eventually political power – and as their labour activity (most of their waking hours) is reduced to a commodity to be bought and sold, and subject to the profit-seeking whims of a boss. From its early days, capitalism's claim to represent the only realistic human freedom has been challenged by anarchists and other libertarian currents with their resounding 'no' to the arbitrariness of Big Property.

Some anarchists – including the Russian noble Pyotr Kropotkin – saw the Neolithic village as a mostly peaceful and self-governing community before the formation of the state and predatory armies started to wreak havoc. Ancient and medieval history offer up plenty of examples that were often elaborate in their aspirations but partial in their achievement: Greek city states, slave revolts against Imperial Rome, monastic communities, heretical sects in revolt against religious authority, agrarian agitators all swam against the tide of arbitrary authority.

Two figures who stand tall in historical memory are Thomas Müntzer, a leader of the peasant revolts in Germany in the early 16th century; and Gerrard Winstanley, an inspiration of the Diggers movement that defended the Commons at the tail-end of the English Revolution in the mid-17th century. Winstanley in particular recognized authority and property as a deadly combination that undermined popular liberty.¹

The roots of formal anarchism can be traced back to the revolutions of 1848. That year a contagion of revolt against despotism spread across Europe – and not only where one would expect it, in revolutionary Paris, but also such previously unimaginable places as Vienna, which had long been under the brutal boot of Metternich's Hapsburg Empire, and

Berlin, which had been subject to the whims of the Prussian aristocracy. From Palermo to Prague, it was the kind of year when the spent ideologies and prerogatives of the old order came up for challenge by minds as well as feet and fists. The end of the year saw dashed hopes, slammed jail cell doors and too many corpses as the powers-that-be took their pound of flesh. In Paris thousands were executed without trial or even examination.

After the failures of 1848, the anarchist movement underwent significant growth, particularly in France and the Slavic and Mediterranean countries. This was not just a question of a few isolated intellectuals but significant sections of working-class opinion, as with the watchmakers of the Swiss Jura or the workers from the marble quarries around the Italian town of Carrara. The continuing popularity of anarchist thinking could be seen clearly in the revolt of the Paris Commune in 1871, when the city rose against an enfeebled government, outraged by its failure to stop Prussian aggression. The influence of Pierre-Joseph Proudhon and the anarchists far outweighed any other socialist current.

Ebb and flow

After the defeat of the Commune, the anarchist movement dwindled to near invisibility. Indeed, as the anarchist writer George Woodcock often pointed out, the history of anarchism is one of recurrent ebb and flow.² He sees a resurgence of libertarian thought and organizing again in the 1900s, with an ebb following the anarchists' defeat at the hands of Bolshevism (1917-22) but another flow in the 1930s, when classical anarchism reached its high-water mark in Catalonia and Andalusia during the Spanish Civil War. Woodcock believes that, while there are historical correspondences between these different waves of anarchism, they were also shaped by very different contexts. He is not alone in seeing libertarian thought as vital to the formation of the international New Left in the 1960s. New Left notions of participatory democracy had much more of a libertarian than a Leninist ring to them. Although Woodcock never lived to see it, he would undoubtedly have recognized the influence of anarchism and other libertarian strains on the global justice and Occupy movements that



Feminism has gone beyond the informal and personal to raise questions as to the legitimacy of how political power is exercised through the state



animate current radical opposition to ever more dubious forms of capitalism.

The Left is well known for its various splits and fissures. To some degree at least, this is because ideas and principles matter more than expediency in socialist culture. Perhaps none of these splits have been as momentous (and unfortunate) as two that took place at the end of the 19th century. In 1872, at a conference of the First International in The Hague, Marx and his allies expelled the anarchists who rallied around figures like Mikhail Bakunin, Errico Malatesta and James Guillaume. This event not only tragically split the forces of the Left but allowed for the evolution of more authoritarian strains of communism without the check of libertarian radicalism.

The second fateful split came to a head in 1896, when the libertarian delegates were expelled from the International Socialist Congress. Principled socialists such as William Morris and Keir Hardie opposed the expulsion but for most social democrats the libertarian criticisms of electoral opportunism and ‘practical’ politics had become just too irritating. Within a generation, bureaucratism and capitulation had become so rife in social democracy that the parties lost their souls by rallying around their respective national flags in the slaughter of World War One.

These parties also had a record of supporting the colonization policies of the European empires amongst the ‘lesser races’ of Asia and Africa. Without voices to raise doubts about the corruptions of conventional politics and state power, social democracy was gradually transformed from an alternative to capitalism to a more humane version of its management.

A broader libertarian impulse

It was not anarchists alone who foresaw and reacted to the problems of top-down power. Within the broader socialist movement voices started to be raised that were critical of both Bolshevism and social democracy for their willingness to use autocratic or conventional state power as the main means for implementing socialist measures. These included Paul Lafarge (Marx’s son-in-law) and William Morris, who challenged the orthodoxies not only about the state but also about the nature of work and the purpose of economic growth.

The seminal figure to emerge as an advocate of a radical but libertarian socialism was, however, Rosa Luxemburg, who was a leader of the left wing of German social democracy. An adroit thinker and dedicated activist, she was quick to realize what would be the ultimate consequences of Bolshevism’s dogmatic interpretation and application of Marx’s ‘dictatorship of the proletariat’ in the Soviet Union. She engaged in political battle on all fronts. She was critical of the capitulations

Anarchism and other libertarian strains influence the global justice and Occupy movements that animate current radical opposition to ever more dubious forms of capitalism

of the centre of German social democracy. She also regretted the autocratic Bolshevik short-cuts that undermined the fledgling power of the Russian working class, which had blossomed in the Soviets (workers’ councils) of 1917. But her hardest struggle, one in which she lost her life, was the workers’ revolt in 1919, which challenged the Junker class that had led Germany into the slaughter of World War One.

The classical anarchism that did battle with Marx and the state socialists may be disappearing. The old doctrines of anarcho-syndicalism and ‘propaganda by the deed’ seem somewhat archaic in this era of mass depoliticization and eco-collapse. In their own way, anarchists too have believed in the Enlightenment notion of Progress with a big P. Murray Bookchin’s notion of a post-scarcity anarchism, with its glorification of liberatory technology is but one example – which, in fairness, Bookchin himself came to question.³ Maybe the real victory of anarchism is not in the triumph of large (if decentralized) organizations, bravery on the barricades or exposing the machinations of the deep state. Perhaps it lies more in the diffusion of a libertarian resistance to authority throughout society, particularly in modern social movements.

A good example here is the rise of the feminist critique of male power and how it is exercised. Feminism has its anarchist roots, of course, in Emma Goldman, an early and persistent champion of women’s emancipation and critic of the sexual slavery she associated with patriarchy.⁴ The growing acceptance and assertion of women’s rights has eliminated or at least significantly challenged a large amount of arbitrary power over the lives of both women and men. But it has gone beyond the informal and personal to raise questions as to the legitimacy of how political power is exercised through the state. Feminism in its more radical manifestations has deepened the critique of instrumental power (generally wielded via the state by men) and posited a more local, self-affirming notion of power exercised through broad community participation.

Social movements such as feminism exist within a broader milieu of ‘civil society’, which include such non-state actors as non-governmental organizations that advocate for the broader public interest and often act as watchdogs on state power. Perhaps the presence of some of the militant and uncompromising offspring of classical anarchism can act as a check to challenge civil society when it drifts in too statist or ‘professional’ a direction. ■

¹ Kenneth Rexroth; *Communalism: From its Origins to the Twentieth Century*, Seabury Press; New York, 1974. ² George Woodcock, *Anarchism and the Anarchists*, Quarry Press, Toronto, 1972. ³ Murray Bookchin, *Post-Scarcity Anarchism*, Wildwood House, London 1974. ⁴ Emma Goldman; *The Traffic in Women and Other Essays*, Times Change Press, New York, 1971.

Eco-divide: this changes everything

The environmental crisis is proving not only a challenge to capitalism but forcing resistance movements to rethink their politics.

The title of this piece comes from Naomi

Klein's excellent book on climate change. There Klein makes the case for a sharp turn away from the looming doomsday that predatory capitalism wilfully refuses to see. But some of the historic alternatives to capitalism have also been blind to this. Before the 1960s, among the notions that the Left shared with capitalism were the centrality (indeed, absolute necessity) of economic growth, a concept of progress dependent on the exploitation of the natural world, and an almost unqualified belief in the beneficial nature of science and technology. The gospel of progress, born in the Enlightenment, held that the future of humanity must depend on 'the conquest of nature' to provide the good life. Division came over how this was to be brought about – through the state or through the market, by the bourgeoisie or by the proletariat, and so on.

With the gradual birth of ecological consciousness – landmarked by the publication of Rachel Carson's 1962 classic *Silent Spring* on the effects of agrochemicals and the 1970s debate over limits to growth – a profound unease about the assumptions underpinning our productivist society has been gathering momentum.¹ Is the widespread use of chemicals in industry and agriculture poisoning our own habitat and that of other species? Is our dependence on non-renewable resources and their rapid depletion putting us in a position of running on empty? Are we turning what should be renewable resources (soil, fish, water, forests – even air) into rapidly depleting non-renewable resources by 'mining' them with heavy technologies (building mega-dams and draining aquifers; using trawler fleets and driftnets; allowing agro-chemical runoff, soil compaction and desertification; clear-cutting forests)? Is our dependence on carbon endangering those who live in coastal areas, river valleys, or other habitats

vulnerable to extreme weather and other consequences of a global temperature rise?

These questions loom increasingly large, casting a shadow over not only capitalism but any orthodox alternative to it. The dismal communist record on the environment can be seen in the dried-up Aral Sea between Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, the radioactive protection zone still surrounding the Chernobyl nuclear reactor in Ukraine, and the looming water and energy crisis in China. Under communism, the triumphalist Stalinist mega-project – redirecting rivers, huge hydroelectric dams, soulless high-rise apartment blocks – were the *sine qua non* of progress.

The collapse of the Soviet bloc actually slowed global climate degradation, at least temporarily, as dysfunctional polluting industries went to the wall. Today, only Cuba, with its emphasis on alternative energy and organic agriculture, stands as a partial alternative to sacrificing the environment on the altar of economic development – and even there it is not clear if ecological initiatives are being carried out through conviction or due to necessities imposed by a Soviet collapse and a US embargo. Only time will tell.

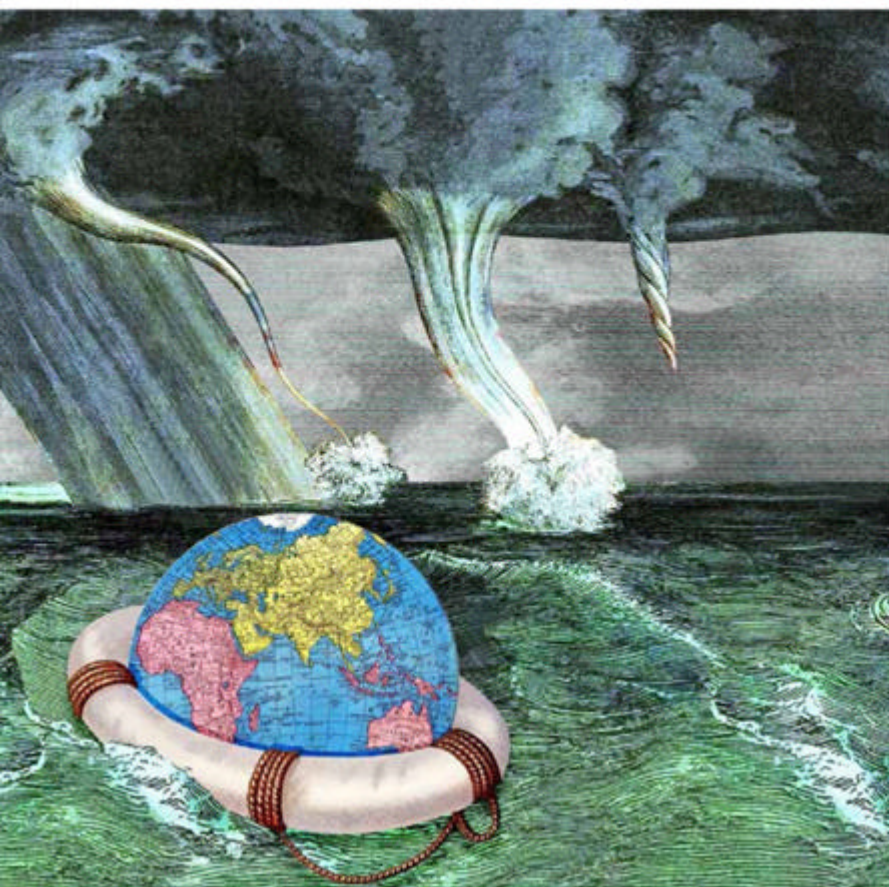
Elsewhere, as with the late Hugo Chávez crafting a form of petro-socialism in Venezuela, short-term advantage seems to be trumping long-term ecological sanity. The history of the post-colonial Global South is marked by nationalist governments, often describing themselves as socialist, that champion development no matter what the ecological costs.

Greening of the Left

An ecologically coherent Left must come to terms with its own productivist roots if it is going to mount a convincing critique of capitalism. The Left must recreate itself by reorganizing around a programme of eco-sanity and challenging a process of growth that is not only moving too fast but also in a clearly unsustainable direction. It is by now pretty obvious that both inequality and growth are built into the very DNA of the capitalist system.

Capitalism can never be about selling us less, living in a more modest way, or reducing inequalities so as to allow us to share within our own societies – let alone the planet as a whole – in a sustainable fashion. The 'me first' ethics that underpin consumer culture are in sharp contradiction to the mutuality needed if we are to find a collective way to live more lightly on the earth.





A more basic challenge to the social and ecological wreckage capitalism is piling up is essential. Just a few basic facts are sufficient to show that the current desperate search for new sources of growth is heading us towards oblivion. First, growth rates across the industrial world have been declining for decades. There are no signs of a reversal of this trend – just the opposite. So it makes good sense to seek a different measure for our economic wellbeing aside from growth. Second, the negative impacts of the growth fetish, both ecological and social, are accumulating to a frightening extent. We would need five or six planet Earths if the whole world consumed and polluted at the same rate as US citizens (about three planets by European rates).

You could explore a range of other issues – such as soil and fresh-water degradation – and arrive at similarly alarming conclusions. Of course, it is true that the ecological footprint is badly skewed in favour of the wealthy. It would take a number of fair-sized African villages to have the same ecological impact as one upper-middle-class multi-vehicle-owning family commuting into New York or London from the affluent suburbs.

Inequality is the other major consequence of skewed capitalist growth. The Occupy movement, protesting against the one per cent and its lightly taxed paper wealth, is just the latest symptom of disenchantment with such

obscene disparities. It is here that red and green preoccupations can rub up against one another in an uncomfortable fashion.

For those of an ecosocialist persuasion, it is essential that the costs of slowing growth are borne in an equitable manner. This means that the basic needs of all populations must be taken into account and the reductions associated with diminished growth possibilities, whether planned or unplanned, be applied first and foremost to those with an opulent lifestyle. It is easier to imagine this happening if degrowth takes place in a thought-out fashion rather than through an unplanned application of ‘lifeboat ethics’ that allows the powerful to protect their privileges while the vulnerable go to the wall. But have no doubt – degrowth there will be! It is just a question of whether this will result in equitable and democratic social arrangements or in gate-guarded communities serviced by underpaid workers and surrounded by large populations of environmental refugees.

A post-growth future

Any alternative to capitalism needs a post-growth future. There are by now many strains of Left ecological thinking trying to hammer out just what this might look like. There are the beginnings of a degrowth movement: this started in France and Spain and is now spreading to North America. There is a social ecology movement inspired by the writings of Murray Bookchin. There have been several attempts to fuse the socialist tradition with environmental concerns. Political theorists James O'Connor and John Bellamy Foster have explored such a synthesis in their writings. These are being underpinned intellectually by the burgeoning field of ecological economics, led by such notables as Herman Daly and Joan Martinez-Alier, as well as by a mounting body of climate and other environmental science that continues to reveal the deadly trajectory of the current growth obsession.

From the Global South comes an indigenous perspective based on the defence of Terra Madre, a competing tendency within the Latin American Left. Elsewhere, movements of resistance in Africa and Asia are working to defend the survival economy on which the rural poor depend by standing against deforestation, in defence of watersheds and in defiance of mega-projects designed to fuel various ‘economic miracles’ built on sand. The notion of a different, more equitable, development strategy has long been a counterfoil to the globalizers’ obsession with GDP growth. It has by now reached the point that any alternative to capitalism which does not accord the ecological survival of humanity a central place simply cannot be taken seriously. ■

1. Rachel Carson, *The Silent Spring*, Houghton and Mifflin, New York, 1962.

It is by now pretty obvious that both inequality and growth are built into the very DNA of the capitalist system

long game. We must protect a thoughtful vision of a healthy and egalitarian sustainability, but also propose popular and sane moves in the here and now. The stakes have never been higher – our fate as a convivial species is on the table in this ancient game.





Polyp.org.uk

Pathways & possibilities



Utopianism of the spirit

The history of different imagined and desirable futures is longer than the current epoch of capitalism through which we are suffering. Arguably, utopian thinking goes back at least to Plato's notion of an enlightened oligarchy ruling over his Republic. The degree to which such futures were or were not utopian (and whether this was or was not a bad thing) has been a cause of sharp disagreement among critics of capitalism. Karl Marx was particularly scornful of utopian thinking among socialists but there continued to be utopian speculations in the writings of William Morris, Edward Bellamy and a number of anarchist thinkers.

This is from Thomas More's original *Utopia*, published in 1516, half a millennium ago:

In all other places, regardless of the prosperity of the country, unless the individual takes care of his own needs, starvation will be his fate. This self-preservation has priority over the common good. Here... no-one ever lacks anything. There is no begrudging the distribution of goods,

that first principles should just be assumed to be embedded in our current way of life – the glorious heritage of our noble ancestors having been won by some heroic (usually military) past struggle. If this is not taken as an article of faith, it opens the door to all kinds of speculative and destabilizing questioning.

Is our democracy really democratic? Do we really have equality of opportunity? Can we not find a better source of social cohesion than individualistic self-promotion? Is our current obsession with growth compatible with the ecological survival of the human species? Is it fair for some people to starve while others live on billions of dollars' worth of inherited wealth? It is pretty clear that those who want to build an alternative to capitalism cannot help but think about what that alternative is going to look like. The warning that arises out of the utopia debate is that we need to be pretty careful about how this is done. Make your utopia open-ended and non-dogmatic, not some 'terminal

UTOPIA

*poverty and begging are unknown; although, possessing nothing, all men are rich. For who is richer than he who lives a happy and tranquil life free from the anxieties of job holding and domestic troubles?*¹

More touches on a sensibility that could help us build the kind of post-growth future currently so necessary to our species survival: an ecological democracy that takes the individual off the consumer treadmill and revalues the quality of daily lives. Much other utopian speculation tends to this kind of peaceful, radical egalitarianism. However, when utopians stray into providing detailed schemes for how the future should be organized, they get into choppy water.

For a conservative, the most irritating thing about utopians is that they always want to return to first principles. The unquestioning belief held by the dominant political class is

point' in history where all human suffering disappears. Avoid being glib. Eschew grand abstractions like the unfortunate 'dictatorship of the proletariat'. Steer clear of detailed blueprints or techno-fantasies. Instead, explore grounded possibilities of how people's lives could and should be better.

We are bound to identify elements of what is occurring in the present as anticipating what might be in the future. Thus, for example, the collapse of the permanent employment economy could presage more democratic and less compulsory forms of work. Or the evolution of civil society and social movements could anticipate a form of self-governance closer to the ideal of democratic self-rule than our current limited forms of political representation. It is also worth remembering that at one time such causes as ending slavery, and child labour, or

introducing the eight-hour day were thought of as impossible utopian dreams.

The German philosopher Ernst Bloch took an idiosyncratic utopian stance and was a source of inspiration in the 1960s for both European radicals and the liberation-theology movement that shook the Catholic Church. Although by no means a believer in blueprints, his work *The Principle of Hope* is considered a classic utopian text for the modern era.² Bloch died in 1977 but he surely would have recognized some modern developments – the Latin American attempt to recraft a socialism for the 21st century, for example, or the defence of the commons against market predators that is sprouting up almost everywhere – as ‘prefigurative elements’ of a different potential future.



A democratic commons

The commons at its most basic includes the earth and all its ecosystems: the atmosphere, fresh waterways and oceans, soil, forests, and all forms of life that interact with them. We all need and have a right to have access to these in order to survive. An expanded definition would also include those things we hold in a collective sense – public healthcare, libraries, sidewalks, bus and subway systems, public insurance, pensions, urban and wilderness parks, public broadcasting, museums, public education and so on.

The definition these days is often extended to include the products of human labour/knowledge, forming a kind of intellectual commons, including such intangibles as medical knowledge, genetic and computing codes, access to radio and TV frequencies and the freedom of digital space. Some commons are local (neighbourhoods or water supply), some are regional (watersheds and forests) while others are global (oceans, biodiversity, the internet).

Since the birth of capitalism there has been a constant pressure to transfer the ownership and control of common resources into private hands. In the earliest days of privatizing land in Britain, this process came to be known as ‘enclosure’ – a word now largely associated with unjust expropriation and exclusion. It is a term still applicable today as commonly held resources are taken for private profit, mostly by large corporations with the complicity of the state. Conventional economics would have it that this is the most efficient way to exploit such resources for the good of all. This view underpins the capacity of mining companies, private utility providers, international agribusiness corporations, for-profit health providers and others to take away from the commons and then sell back to the public – or



at least to those sections of the public with the means to pay.

Such privatizers avoid the use of the notion or language of the commons, relying instead on a ‘frontier’ metaphor so that they may paint themselves as bold pioneers. The implication is that this frontier was somehow ‘empty’ when in reality it was just commonly held. The alienation of commonwealth means a loss of control not only of services and resources themselves but also over how they are developed. In the case of the natural commons, this process almost always sacrifices sustainability and ecological health for speed and expediency at the lowest possible cost.

The Global South still contains large numbers of people who depend on a natural subsistence economy rooted in access to the commons. These include those practising slash and burn and other forms of small-scale agriculture, inshore and offshore artisanal fishers, forest people who hunt and harvest, and nomadic peoples, many of whom are dependent on access to common grazing land. Often (but not always) such people overlap with indigenous societies. Such people can be described as living ‘off the grid’. There are also smaller, but still important, groups of people in the Global North in this position.

These people have, by their very dependence on direct access to the commons, become humanity’s first line of defence in preserving its integrity. The commons is not just a battlefield between corporate predators and those who

resist them – it is also a source of hope for those willing to imagine a world beyond capitalism. It represents a space between the private market and the political state in which humanity can control and democratically root our common wealth. Both the market and the state have proved inadequate for this purpose.

An alternative to capitalism must in the end be based on a more complex sense of the human than orthodox economists' notion that we are all hardwired to a rational calculus of individual costs and benefits. The influential commons theorist and Nobel Prize winner Elinor Ostrom proposes a different, more optimistic, notion. She believes that: 'we live in a web of social relations infused with norms and values; we are intrinsically co-operative and as a result collective action is possible and may lead to sustainable and equitable governance practices.'³ Ostrom opens up the debate about how the commons should be governed rather than just assuming the market

abetted by the state can handle the job – she sees a process of 'deliberative democracy' as essential if there is to be proper human stewardship of the commons. Others carry the analysis further and see in the commons the potential to restructure the underlying configuration of power between markets, states and societies.

While struggles over particular aspects of the commons have become everyday events, what is often missing is a more comprehensive sense of the commons as a whole that needs protection and extension. Such a commons must include the upstream (watersheds, fisheries, local food production systems, sustainable forests) as well as the downstream (public goods and services such as water, electricity, sanitation and communications). This commons should be governed by a system of democratic checks and balances that ensures ecological health as well as sustainable livelihoods for people at both ends of the stream.



Carlos Garcia Rawlins/Reuters

A continent turns left

Latin America's history of repression is both very ancient and all too modern. The genocide of the Spanish conquistadors gave way to years of bloody dictatorships that smothered democracy in favour of Washington Consensus capitalism from the 1970s to the 1990s. Tens of thousands died for merely trying to exercise rights that *gringos* have long taken for granted. Chile under the Pinochet regime became a neoliberal model to be bandied about by its US sponsors for other Southern countries to emulate. In this exemplary autocratic paradise, the only real freedom was that given to private capital to go wherever its investment inclinations led. It was a model that enshrined inequality, in a region that was already the most unequal in the world.

But things are changing. These days inequality in Latin America has dropped to its lowest level for 30 years – and this at a time when the rest of the world is seeing the gap between rich and poor grow dramatically. It is notable that Venezuela under the Bolivarian policies of Hugo Chávez (and now Nicolas Maduro) has the most equal distribution of income on the continent. Where Left governments have excelled is in seriously addressing long-neglected poverty via targeted social programmes. In many cases, extreme poverty has been cut in half over the past decade. There has also been strong support for the co-operative sector (the number of co-ops in Venezuela went from around 700 to tens of thousands⁴) and for worker takeovers of mostly bankrupt or deserted businesses (particularly in Argentina, but also elsewhere).

There have been a number of direct-democracy initiatives devolving power to local community councils in Venezuela and to indigenous territories in Bolivia and Ecuador. In Brazil, the left wing of the Workers' Party pioneered the idea of a participatory budget in the southern city of Porto Alegre, building on dissatisfaction with conventional urban structures. Although this has had mixed success locally, it has become an important standard of municipal democracy on the continent and beyond. A focal point has been to move beyond granting welfare from above to local power embedded in workplaces and communities.

The Aymara and Quechua peoples of the Andean highlands are today using the pre-Inca tradition of *ayllu* (a self-governing, highly flexible form of home community based on collective rights) as a way of resisting outside domination. For these people (and many others), these traditions are not museum pieces but can be 're-inscribed' as part of a living tradition that has shown a remarkable ability to adapt in order to survive.

The best political thinking within the Bolivarian movement draws from Mexico's indigenous Zapatista movement's notion of 'leading by following' or 'leading from behind'. The basic idea here is to identify those popular tendencies at the base of society that are pushing forward a radical democratic alternative and to foster and sustain them in their endeavours. So movements to take over factories and estates or to set up community-controlled health clinics are encouraged rather than artificially created from above.

The basic tension within this kind of leftist



movement is between those who think that their goals are best achieved through a more efficient top-down politics, be they career-minded bureaucrats in Caracas or timid social democrats in Brasília, and those who insist on a new kind of democratic ecosocialist politics from below. The seductive luxuries and pomp that come with national power will always be dangerous, as will a tendency towards an easy pragmatism that drowns dreams in practicalities.

The differences express themselves over both limits and methods: popular assemblies or bureaucratic dictate; behind-the-scenes manoeuvres or the politics of the street. In Bolivia, Ecuador and Argentina, there is real disagreement between the Left in the streets and that in government. The Ecuadorian government of Rafael Correa, in particular, has had some sharp disagreements with the country's Left over issues of the environment, resource development and indigenous rights.

Here, as elsewhere, there is a political cost to giving in to the pressures of the corporate Right. If politics is the art of the possible, and agitation the art of the desirable, they need to be kept in creative tension without either being entirely abandoned. The large demonstrations spearheaded by activists for free public

transportation that shook pre-World Cup Brazil in June 2013 were further proof that the political class, whatever its Left credentials, is on notice to deliver the goods.

The fundamental point is that these are not smooth, well-oiled political machines underpinning worked-out leftist electoral projects. Instead, this '21st-century socialism' is something a good deal messier. It is rather a diverse and multifaceted movement from below, without which any electoral successes would lose both their way and their meaning. This is also why its gains will not be easily overturned by this or that defeat at the polls, the death of a leader or the subtle (and not-so-subtle) pressures of the predators of corporate globalization.

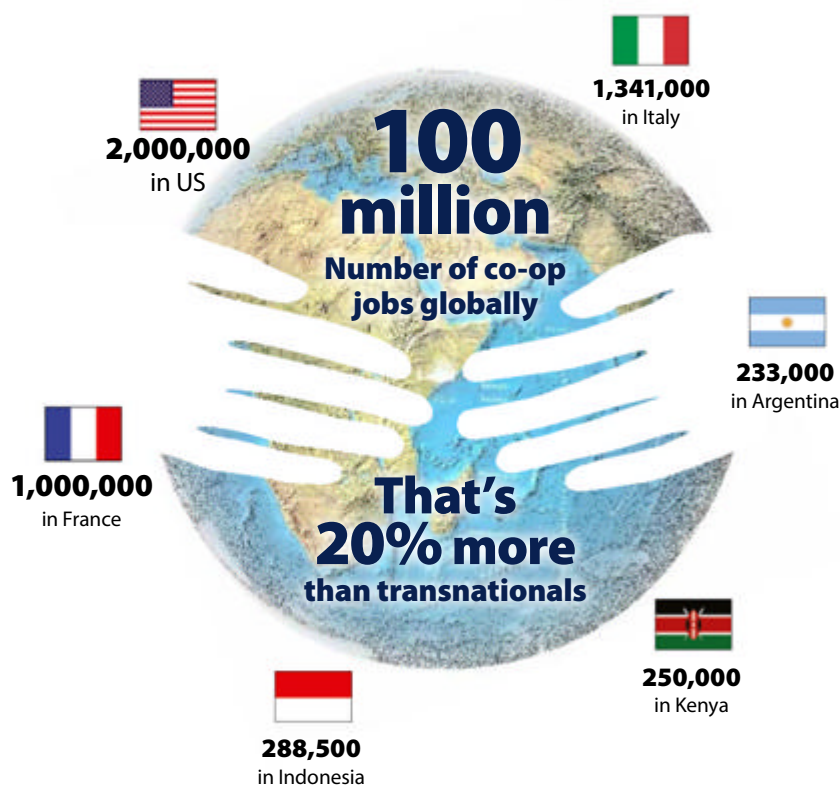
The movement is made up of slum-dwellers, students, indigenous people, squatters, workers (both in and out of employment), those who survive in the informal sector, teachers, farmers, activists, environmentalists, trade unionists and many, many others. It is not that all of these individuals and groups agree in some facile show of unity – far from it. It is that they have all found a political home from which they can fight for their rights and to bring a world beyond capitalism a little closer.

A reciprocal economy

By the early 21st century we had truly arrived at a different time and a different culture on the Left, with a 'movement of movements' coming together to share experiences and perspectives at World Social Forums on almost every continent. A persistent orientation of that contemporary Left, at least the part that still seeks a way out of capitalism, is what has come to be called the 'autonomist' perspective. This grew out of French radical theory and

the Italian New Left but is today lodged in the thought and actions of the global justice and Occupy movements, while informing the politics of many other social movements.

Autonomists believe that it is not enough to take over the existing institutions – the state, jobs, weapons, factories, technologies – and turn them in a different liberatory direction. Instead, they place their hope in a radical 'exit' from the system after which 'everything must be reinvented'. In doing this they ask questions that subvert not only capitalism but much of



the classical socialist tradition as well. Why participate in an economics of centralized growth that spreads inequality while destroying the biosphere? What would be the purpose of any self-management if workers continued to produce the same weapons and waste? For the autonomists, hope lies in the refusal both of work and other forms of participation dictated by capital's system of command.

But exit isn't enough. After we are out the door, what then? The autonomists need to overcome their distaste for debating the possible shape of a post-capitalist future. Still, their emphasis on seeing the seeds of that future in the present remains a fruitful antidote to the suicidal refrain that 'there is no alternative'.

Every day, all over the world, people are working to create alternatives: there is, for example, a vast co-operative economy made up of production and consumer co-ops, worker co-operatives, credit unions, co-operative poolings of capital, co-housing schemes that involve hundreds of millions of people. Some are very large, such as the dense network of Mondragon co-ops in the Spanish Basque country, while others are tiny urban neighbourhood or village ventures that vary widely in strength and resilience.

In some places these co-operatives are a large and important player in national economies. In Italy there are 16,000 producer co-operatives, while, with five million members, Italy's consumer co-ops are second only to those of Japan, and account for 60 per cent of the country's home and healthcare system. Their track record has also been good. Over the past two decades, while Italy's corporate sector has been cutting its workforce, the largest producer

co-ops have been growing both in terms of jobs created and of market share. The retail co-ops, meanwhile, have enjoyed sustained growth while keeping their prices lower than their competitors'.⁵

Co-operatives provide over 100 million jobs worldwide, which is 20 per cent more than the number employed by transnational corporations. These co-operatives are in turn rooted in a broader social economy made up of NGOs, self-help groups, trade unions, voluntary associations (often with unpaid leadership), all engaged in not-for-profit activities. This is not to say that this social economy is in opposition to capitalism – in fact it often plays a kind of damage-control role, ameliorating some of the social fallout resulting from the shredding of the safety net. Nevertheless, millions of people are choosing to work in alternative fields attracted by reciprocal values beyond the ethos of individual self-advancement and with at least the possibility of more democratic input than that dictated by traditional capitalist command. The value of reciprocity is key here.

Without some kind of reciprocity society would no longer be able to exist. Without what the anarchist anthropologist David Graeber calls a kind of 'baseline communism', life would simply cease to operate. If we treated each other – our friends, our neighbours, our children, our parents, even strangers – strictly on the basis of profit and loss, life would be intolerable.⁶ So why shouldn't we make the principle of generous reciprocity so present in everyday interactions the basis of economic life rather than the current model of competing egoism?

For this to be effective we need a shared vision of a different future that can act as a political pole of attraction shifting the destructive momentum in which we are caught. Only if this starts happening will we be able to stop preaching to the choir and reach out to those who live in the suburbs, populate the shopping malls, hold down two or three low-paid jobs to feed their kids, and see no way out of the spiritual desert that capitalism is quickly becoming.

To create an ecological democracy means to reinstate active citizenship as the centrepiece of political life that can draw hundreds of millions of people into shaping an alternative way of living. If such large numbers are to buy in, we need to be much more convincing in laying out our vision of how things could be different. ■

¹ Jacoby, *The End of Utopia: Politics and Culture in an Age of Apathy*, Basic Books, New York, 1999. ² William K. Carroll, 'Crisis, Movements and Counter-Hegemony', in Henry Veltmeyer (ed), *21st Century Socialism*, Fernwood Publishing, Halifax, 2010. ³ Elinor Ostrom, *Governing the Commons*, Cambridge University Press, 1991. ⁴ Jeffery R Weber, 'Venezuela under Chávez', in *21st Century Socialism*, Fernwood Books, Halifax, 2011. ⁵ John Restakis, 'Tax Justice and the Civil Economy', in *The Great Revenue Robbery*, edited by Richard Swift, Between The Lines, Toronto, 2013. ⁶ David Graeber, *Debt: The First 5000 Years*, Melville House, Brooklyn, 2011.

What should we stand for?

There is no real choice for those who believe

in an alternative but to put forward a set of ideas that could lead to a more appealing future for humankind – one within a sustainable ecological framework that gives us a chance of collective survival. Otherwise our protests become gratuitous or simply nihilistic. We are painted into a corner as dreamers and nay-sayers, out of touch with the concerns and interests of ordinary folk.

This is not entirely an unfair accusation. Radicals sometimes live in their own subcultural bubble and, while maintaining great faith in ‘the people’ as an abstraction, are quick to negative judgement of actual human beings whom they feel are tainted by consumerism and bourgeois prejudices. We can get too caught up in the finer points of identity politics or the intricacies of inter-imperialist rivalry to bother with those folks worried about their children’s homework or searching for sales at the local mall. We need to move beyond the anti-politics of pure protest and actually start ‘proposing’ alternatives that are both viable and appealing.

A good start is rethinking our addiction to growth and embracing a policy of what people are coming to call ‘degrowth’. Degrowth is a multi-dimensional concept that has to do not only with downscaling to reduce GDP but also with providing an escape from the total domination of the economic in our lives. It seeks to promote social equity and recreate democracy on a more meaningful, decentralized scale.

It is a truism that infinite growth is an impossibility in a finite world. This is the taproot of all radical environmentalism. We are running up against the limits of growth in everything from fresh water and fertile soil to the provision for employing human labour in a meaningful way within the current market context. Increasingly, we are put in the position of having to ‘survive progress’. What was supposed to bring us prosperity and wellbeing is making life on earth more and more insecure. This ‘security deficit’ is spreading from the economics of daily life to the entire ecological framework that sustains us. The growth machine still provides unheard-of wealth for those at the top, but less and less for even those people who think of themselves as ‘middle class’.

So what would a degrowth policy framework look like? It is very much a programme of economic democratization based on the belief that material growth needs to be replaced with an economy of sufficiency. It contends that economic decisions should be taken in the public

sphere by those most directly affected by them: by workers and local communities, and as part of a democratically derived notion of the public interest. Here are some basic principles.

- Emphasizing the quality of life as measured in convivial culture and human relationships rather than the quantity of life as measured in consumer goods.
- Prioritizing the local in everything: in decision-making, in energy and agricultural systems, in the disposal/reuse/recycling of waste, and so on. The aim would be to achieve as high a level of community self-sufficiency as is reasonably possible.
- Downshifting – a term used to describe a reduction of the ecological footprint of both individuals and communities.
- Reducing working hours to eliminate ecologically and socially damaging work, and implementing a universal basic income in order to support an expansion of community-defined volunteer opportunities.
- Allocating resources democratically so that degrowth would take place on a just basis – replacing the current practice of dealing with economic crisis and shortage through austerity policies that unfairly affect the less well-off who are more dependent on public provision.
- Reducing dramatically unecological forms of living such as suburban sprawl, and encouraging a more equal distribution of population between rural and urban areas – but with enough density in urban planning to avoid waste in providing services.
- Revitalizing political life through decentralization and direct democracy. This would include popular assemblies, workplace democracy and referenda – as well as citizen juries to maximize participation and discourage the emergence of a professional political class.

It might be useful to think of growth-addicted capitalism as a maze and search sensible exit points at the same time as building sustainable livelihood projects to ensure species survival.

This magazine has sketched a very brief history of past alternatives to capitalism and some of the dead-end streets that have ended in failure, co-optation or worse.

But it has also, I hope, teased out some of the threads of possibility from which a future alternative might be woven. These are various and the richness of their diversity will present a challenge for even the most skilled weaver. There are those, such as indigenous radicalism, which draw from experiences predating capitalism and celebrate values that, in modified form, could help us live within our means. There is a utopian tradition, often disparaged by the orthodox Left, which has the potential for helping us think imaginatively about the future. There is the radical reappraisal of the commons. There are traditions of self-rule that keep reasserting themselves (most recently in Latin America) from which we can draw hope of a politics that is about more than the self-preservation of the political class.

Can such traditions learn to coexist creatively? The path, as they say, is made by walking. ■

Panama

In 2014, conservative entrepreneur

Juan Carlos Varela came to power promising to clean up Panamanian politics after his predecessor, super-market tycoon Ricardo Martinelli, was accused of awarding overpriced multimillion-dollar contracts during his period in office.

The rampant corruption is a stark reminder that Panama has a long way to go before it can shake off its banana-republic past. However, the country has remained politically stable following the turmoil of the 1980s and 1990s and, as Panama commemorated the 25th anniversary of the US invasion at the end of 2014, it was clear a lot had changed since then-senator John Kerry described it as a 'narco-kleptocracy'.

Former dictator Manuel Noriega is languishing in prison and since the US handed the Canal back to the Panamanian authorities in 1999, the \$2.5 billion a year that it rakes in has turned Panama into the fastest-growing economy in Latin America.

An ambitious expansion project due to be completed in 2016 will mean the Canal can accommodate large vessels. The aim is to double revenues over the next 10 years, consolidating Panama's status as 'the gateway for Latin America'.

Prosperity has also derived from the country's reputation as a tax haven. Stringent bank-secrecy laws have wooed

thousands of foreign corporations – and drug money – turning Panama into a tropical Switzerland.

Throw in a massive real-estate boom and the country's economy is growing at an annual rate of nine per cent. With the tallest skyscraper in Latin America – a 70-storey Trump hotel and tower – lavish malls, US fast-food chains and Central America's first subway under construction, Panama City could be Miami's twin.

Not all Panamanians, however, have benefited from the boom. In contrast to the flashiness of the capital, the country's second largest city – Colón, on the Caribbean coast – is a stark reminder that 40 per cent of Panamanians live in poverty.

Sewage runs through the alleyways – the stench rendered more pungent by the intense tropical heat – and dilapidated colonial buildings await demolition like prisoners on death row. Although, on the whole, Panama is relatively safe compared to murder hotspots like Honduras and Guatemala, crime is rife in this languishing port city.

Unlike Panama City, Colón is predominantly black and many residents believe that racial discrimination is largely to blame for the city's stagnation.

Most tourists, however, are rarely confronted with the squalor and despair of Colón as their cruise ships

dock in the city's dazzling terminal and they get ready for a shopping spree in the Western Hemisphere's largest duty-free trade zone.

Large-scale infrastructure projects such as the \$225-million Barro Blanco hydroelectric plant have also come at a heavy social cost. Currently 95-per cent complete, Barro Blanco has been the source of a bitter feud between Genisa, the contractor for the dam, and the Ngäbe Buglé indigenous group, which is strongly opposed to the project on environmental grounds.

Indigenous communities fear the dam will flood their autonomous territory or *comarca*, endangering the livelihoods of some 5,000 farmers who rely on the Tabasará River for potable water, agriculture and fishing.

A week of violent clashes between protesters and the police in February 2012 left two demonstrators dead and a deep sense of mistrust between the government and indigenous communities. With more than 80.5 per cent of indigenous Panamanians living below the poverty line, indigenous people are the most excluded segment of the population.

Panama may no longer be a 'narco-kleptocracy' but it remains a country of glaring inequalities that if not addressed could burst the bubble of the country's boom in years to come. ■

Louisa Reynolds

At a glance



Leader: Juan Carlos Varela.

Economy: GNI per capita \$10,700 (Costa Rica \$9,550, United States \$53,670).

Monetary unit: The balboa is tied to the US dollar, which is also legal tender in Panama.

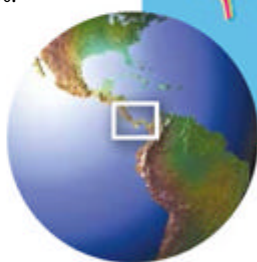
Main exports: Gold, bananas, shrimp, sugar, iron and steel waste, pineapples, watermelon.

People: 3.9 million. Annual growth rate 1.35%.

People per square kilometre: 52.

Health: Infant mortality 15 deaths per 1,000 live births (Costa Rica 8, US 6). Lifetime risk of maternal death 1 in 450 (US 1 in 1,800). HIV prevalence rate 0.7%.

Environment: Panama loses more than 1% of its primary forest cover every year as a result of road construction, logging, industrial goldmining and clearing for agriculture and pastureland. Deforestation threatens one of the country's main sources of income, as the tropical forest of the Canal watershed ensures the flow of two billion gallons of water per day necessary to operate the Canal's locks.



Religion: Catholic 72%, Protestant 19%, other religions 5%, no belief 4%. The constitution and other laws protect religious freedom. There are no reports of discrimination based on religious affiliation.

Language: Spanish is the official language. A minority of Panamanians speak indigenous languages such as Buglere, Embera and Ngabere, as well as other languages such as Japanese, Hebrew, Arabic, Eastern Yiddish and Korean.

Human Development Index: 0.765 (Costa Rica 0.773, US 0.914).



Clockwise from top left: A container ship navigates Miraflores Lock, the first of three locks on the Panama Canal. A woman looks out from a doorway in Panama City's old quarter, Casco Viejo. A worker at the Cigarros Joyas de Panama factory in La Pintada rolls a cigar. Wooden houses along the seashore of the island of Bocas del Toro. Fishers board their boats in Panama City's harbour; the city skyline is visible in the background. Photos by Stefan Boness / Panos.

Star ratings Last profiled May 1996



INCOME DISTRIBUTION ★

Despite the Canal income, glaring inequalities persist and almost 40% of the population lives in poverty. 1996 ★



LITERACY ★★★★★

94%. Enrolments in the upper levels of schooling have increased strikingly since the 1960s. 1996 ★★★★★



LIFE EXPECTANCY ★★★★★

78 years, up from 75 in 2000. The murder rate has dropped by 19% over the past five years and is well below murder hotspots in the region such as Honduras and Guatemala. 1996 ★★★★★



FREEDOM ★★

Indigenous leaders opposed to hydroelectric projects suffer harassment and intimidation, and several protesters have been murdered. The government has attempted to silence criticism of public officials. Prison conditions remain harsh and in some cases life-threatening. 1996 ★★



POSITION OF WOMEN ★★

Although Panama has had a female president and a number of women have held top posts in government and education, domestic violence remains a serious problem and conviction rates are low. 1996 ★★



SEXUAL MINORITIES ★★★

Homosexuality has been legal since 2008 but there is no recognition for same-sex couples and no laws protecting gay people from discrimination.

NI assessment

POLITICS ★★★

After only a year in power, President Varela has been embroiled in a series of high-profile nepotism and corruption scandals. For many Panamanians, this has proved that the new government has failed to bring about a significant improvement in transparency and accountability. Although democratic institutions have improved significantly since 1998, corruption remains a major problem. An independent judiciary is still lacking.

★★★★★ EXCELLENT
★★★★ GOOD
★★★ FAIR
★★ POOR
★ APPALLING



The annual international Hot Docs Film Festival in Toronto features the best of the crop of the previous 12 months' documentaries. **RICHARD SWIFT** picks some highlights from the 2015 festival.

The Amina Profile

(85 minutes)

directed by **Sophie Deraspe**

'A gay girl in Damascus' was a blog many visited in the early days of the Syrian civil war to find out what was really happening on the streets of that nation's capital. As the Assad regime pulled a curtain of secrecy over the country, the cyberworld became the way the opposition communicated with the outside world. So Amina became a minor celebrity, with her insightful blogs about the harsh realities of the regime and the difficulties of lesbian life in a socially conservative Arab country. For



some of Amina's correspondents, including a young *Québécoise* woman, the connection to Amina became a torrid online relationship. Then the gay girl disappeared, prompting fears of detention or worse, and setting in train a solidarity campaign to find her that involved activists from many parts of the globe. This tale of suspense and intrigue, pulled together brilliantly by Sophie Deraspe, deals with deceit and betrayal. **The Amina**

Profile is a shocking and cautionary tale of the modern world and the ambiguities of identity online.

★★★

theaminaprofile.com

Haida Gwaii: On the Edge of the World (74 minutes)

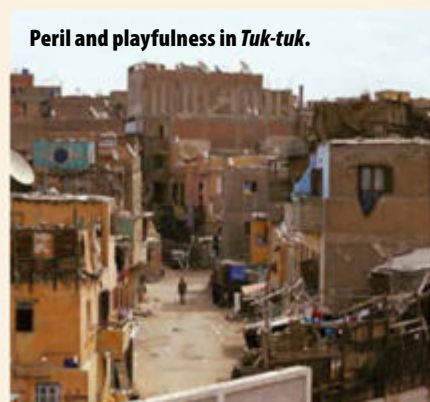
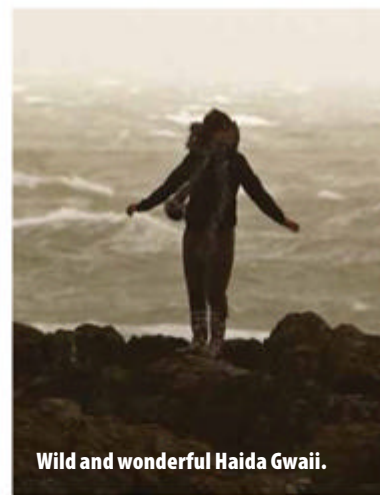
directed by **Charles Wilkinson**

Stunning cinematography captures the lush wilderness and seascapes of one of the few truly wild places left on earth – the island archipelago and home to the Haida people, off the northwest coast of Canada. Director Charles Wilkinson blends interviews with sweeping low-level aerial shots, intimate undersea and on-the-ground close-ups. But this is no mere travelogue. It's the story of the Haida people and their local allies struggling to defend the islands against transnational extractive industries abetted by the Canadian

state. The Haida people's long history of resistance to cut-and-run logging and industrial trawler fleets is told by elders and environmentalists. Currently they face the most deadly challenge as Prime Minister Stephen Harper's petro-state in Ottawa threatens the treacherous waters of the Hecate Strait with pipelines and oil spills that will destroy the fragile ecosystems of Haida Gwaii. A wonderful film about an alternative the world desperately needs.

★★★★

charleswilkinson.com



Tuk-tuk (75 minutes)

directed by **Romany Saad**

Egyptian director Romany Saad provides an intimate portrait of three young Cairo drivers of semi-legal, three-wheeled motorized rickshaws. Abdullah, Sharon and Bika are still children (one is just 12) who must survive the perils of Cairo traffic, thieves, other taxis and corrupt police, in order to feed their families. They navigate the teeming byways as best they can, bargaining for fuel and to

reduce the cost of bribes, but still finding occasional moments of humour and conviviality. The camera mounted in the *tuk-tuk* cab provides fast-paced views of the richness and peril of the city's streetscapes. Interviews with the families reveal a desperate dependence on the young drivers. The film eschews notions of victimhood for a more complex tapestry of peril and playfulness as the boys do what they can to make the best of their prison of poverty.

★★★

tuk-tukfilm.com

They Will Have to Kill Us First

(105 minutes)

directed by **Johanna Schwartz**

This brave film is set in Mali during the jihadi invasion that temporarily took over the ancient city of Timbuktu and the French intervention that followed. Director Schwartz tells the story through Mali's rich musical community and the way they respond to the ebb and flow of civil war and divided loyalties. Characters range from the UN-celebrated singer Disco to blues guitarist Moussa Sidi. Resisting narrow partisanship, Schwartz reveals the tensions between north and south, the brutality of the army and discrimination against the desert-dwelling Tuareg population that have allowed Islamic fundamentalists to gain a foothold.

The film is a wonderful blend of music and interviews that enables Mali's musicians to relate how they found the space to resist the sharia law that was used to try to silence them, as radio stations were destroyed and instruments had to be hidden. The music, in combination with the



Song returns to Timbuktu.

stark beauty of the desert, makes this a wonderful film – culminating in a peace concert organized by Khaira Arby (*'Nightingale of the North'*) to mark the return of song to embattled Timbuktu.

★★★★

theywillhavetokillusfirst.com

Drone (78 minutes)

directed **Tonje Hessen Schei**

Most documentary festivals feature a film that everybody needs to see. For me that film is **Drone**. This doc comprehensively tackles the humanitarian and legal implications of the US government's programme to engage in extra-judicial killing in places like North Waziristan, Somalia and Yemen. What does it mean when the secret state acts as judge, jury and executioner? The film moves back and forth between Nevada, where the buttons are pushed, and northwest Pakistan, where the



Drone: a film you need to see.

terrorists – and anyone else who gets in the way – become targets. **Drone** is held together with testimony from those who live under constant threat of death from above and a former drone pilot, Brandon Bryant, whose conscience proved too much for the 'easy kill' associated with remote warfare. Norwegian director Tonje Hessen Schei draws out the full implications of a lucrative weapons system that has already killed thousands and is now

available for potential use by some 81 countries.

★★★★

nfi.no

FILMS

Mavis (85 minutes)

directed by **Jessica Edwards**

Mavis Staples is the leading voice of the Staples Singers, whose blues-tinged gospel music resonated for nearly six decades. The Staples family came out of black Chicago in the 1950s with Mavis' dad – 'Pops' – providing the acumen and blues guitar to make them the US's 'first family of song'. The Staples moved quickly from traditional gospel to a wide range of contemporary musical expression and embraced the freedom music of the civil-rights movement.

This musical biopic is powered by Mavis' astounding voice but also her enthusiasm and ability to bring to life the ups and downs of trying to survive as a black woman in the music industry. If the film has a shortcoming it is the failure to get beyond Mavis the performer to Mavis the person. Still, this is an uplifting, positive effort with classic hits like 'Respect Yourself' and 'I'll Take You There' leaving any audience inspired. Now in her mid-seventies, the irrepressible Mavis still tours and never misses an encore.

★★★★

mavisfilm.com



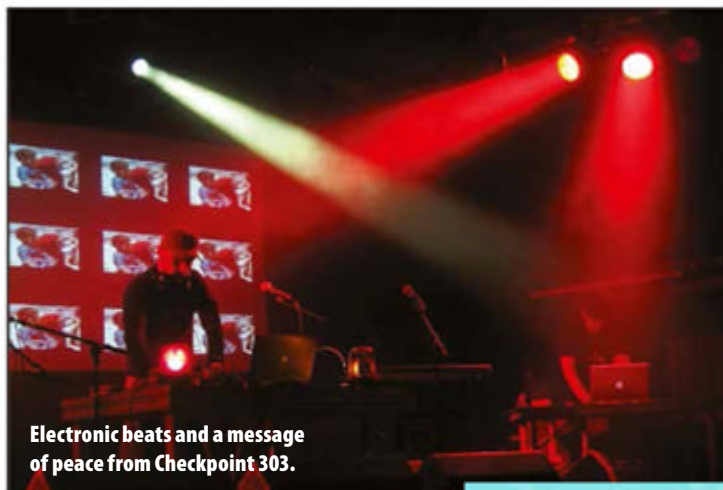
The inspiring and irrepressible Mavis Staples.

The Iqrit Files

by Checkpoint 303 (KKV Records, FX 413 CD/download)

In 1948, the inhabitants of Iqrit, a small Palestinian Christian village in northern Galilee, were forced off their ancestral land by the Israeli army. When the villagers tried to return, the Israeli state bulldozed the village. This is one story among the thousands that make up Palestine's narrative of the *nakba* ('the catastrophe'). Today, the former inhabitants are allowed to bury their dead in Iqrit's cemetery.

Checkpoint 303 is a collective of musicians, artists and sound designers with an original base in Palestine and Tunisia. Led by Soundcutter MoCha, CP303 has featured in these pages before for its combination of peace activism and electronic beats. **The Iqrit Files** is its first full-length album, following *Checkpoint Tunes* (a self-released album recorded between 2006-11 and still available on free download) and it is built around the radical appropriation of the tenet underlying the State of Israel: the right of return. For anyone who has watched and listened to CP303's rich bricolage over the years, **The Iqrit Files** does not disappoint. Using *oud*, beats, political quotes, samples and field recordings, this album is a focused witness against systemic violence. Much of its greatest force comes from the beautiful renditions of traditional Palestinian songs by singers Jawaher Shofani and Wardeh Sbeit and poet Jihad Sbeit that were recorded in Iqrit itself.



Electronic beats and a message of peace from Checkpoint 303.

With a handsomely illustrated brochure that gives, in Arabic and English, lyrics and the unadorned facts of Iqrit's recent history, this is a fine work. Sound and song have often been about yearning and memorialization, but never has the mix been more poignant. Here is an album to break your heart.

★★★★ LG
checkpoint303.com



MUSIC

Xáos (Chaos)

by Xáos (Independent Records, PGR 001 CD/download)

It's hard not to hear this highly individual album as the voice of Greek tragedy echoing through the past to the tremulous present of the austerity-pressed country. Greek composer, artist and painter Ahetas and the Anglo-Greek musician Dubulah, the main movers behind Xáos, employ ancient Eastern instruments – the *ney* and *bul bul* flutes, the Pontic lyre, to name but three – alongside newer instruments such as guitar, drums and an Arp 2600 synthesizer (in its own terms, an ancient and lovely machine) to draw the lines.

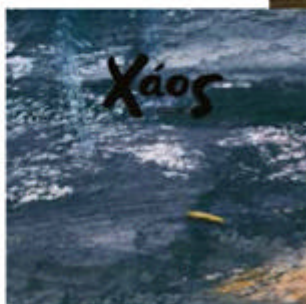
Ten years in the making, Xáos is billed as a post-Troika trance album. Certainly, Dubulah (aka Nick Page), an electronics-orientated musician and programmer with a background with Transglobal Underground and Dub Colossus, has a wealth of experience in the creation of some of the more interesting sounds of the club scene; but a post-Troika album? While Ahetas, Dubulah and their assorted musicians are absolutely correct in demonstrating that Greece is so much more than the emptiness of its coffers, they have also made an album that stresses the wonderful continuity

of sound textures through history and to the future. (And track titles such as 'Antigone in Syntagma Square' accentuate this flow.) Xáos is an instrumental album, with a pleasing, floating ambience that favours melody over rhythm, but its title does not refer to political realities so much as the primal, mythological, creative soup of chaos – from which all things are made.

★★★★ LG
independentrecordsltd.co.uk



Dubulah and Ahetas, challenging musical clichés.



MUSIC

The Kindness of Enemies

by **Leila Aboulela** (Orion Books, ISBN 9781409160397)

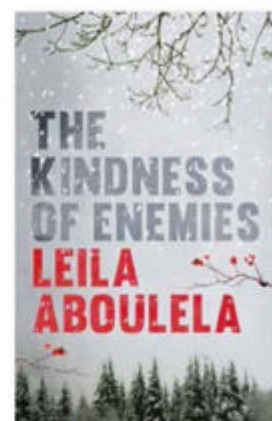
The latest offering from Caine Prize-winning author Leila Aboulela is a wonderful journey across time (from 1839 to 2011) and continents (from Scotland to Chechnya to Sudan), interwoven with the universal themes of identity, displacement and the desire to belong.

Natasha Hussein is a Sudanese-Russian academic based in Aberdeen, who is researching the life of Sufi spiritual leader and freedom fighter Imam Shamil of Dagestan. Natasha has abandoned her Muslim faith and her surname in an attempt to fit in, but as a 'half and half', as she calls herself, she struggles to feel at home

or to find people who can truly understand her. So she is drawn to one of her students, Oz (real name Osama – he, too, is trying to avoid a certain association) and Oz's mother, Malak, and to their link to Shamil. As she delves further into 19th-century Russian politics, Natasha is faced with difficult questions about herself and her relationship with her family, but ultimately her journey of self-discovery brings her home.

Leila Aboulela is a writer of flair and compassion, and **The Kindness of Enemies** is a thoughtful, insightful exploration of Muslim values (a welcome corrective to today's tabloid scare stories) and of the difficulties, and benefits, of being 'different'.

★★★★ JL orionbooks.co.uk



S.N.U.F.F.

by **Victor Pelevin**
translated from the Russian by
Andrew Bromfield
(Gollancz, ISBN 978147321302)

Science Fiction as satire on political systems and social trends has a long and distinguished history stretching back to 1984, *Brave New World* and (the granddaddy of these more famous dystopias) Yevgeny Zamyatin's *We*. Following in these illustrious footsteps is Russian

novelist Victor Pelevin with **S.N.U.F.F.**, which he styles as a 'utopia'. Set many hundreds of years in the future, society is literally stratified, with the privileged elite living a high-tech high life on a floating city, Byzantium ('Big Byz' to its inhabitants) and the poor scratching a subsistence living on the surface in war-torn Urkania. War is vital to the economy

of both airborne and earthbound states, with the citizenry of Urkania embroiled in endless baroque, staged conflicts, which the population of Byzantium view as their primary source of entertainment.

Filming – and, where necessary, covertly instigating – these wars is drone cameraman Damilola Karpov, whose work for the Special Newsreel/Universal Feature Film network is avidly consumed by the viewing public. Karpov's latest project is recording the activities of two young Urkanians, Grim and Chloe, as they become unwitting protagonists in the lead-up to the latest bout of bloodletting.

Pelevin has much slapstick fun with the antics of the panjandrum of Urkania and Big Byz, and his satire on war as entertainment and the confection of national causes for financial gain is effective if rather broad-brush. The parallel with the Ukrainian crisis is obvious but not overstated and, in the end, **S.N.U.F.F.** is a rattling good read that is confident enough in its message not to take itself too seriously.

★★★ PW orionbooks.co.uk

Syria Burning

by **Charles Glass** (OR Books, ISBN 978939293886)

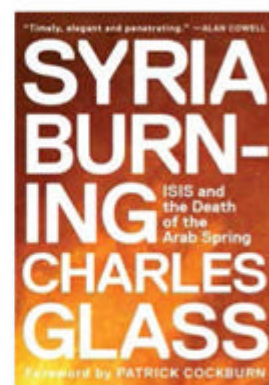
Almost 30 years ago Charles Glass made the first of his rambling journeys across the Levant. It was a trip that ended in Beirut, where Glass spent 62 days chained to the wall of a Hizbullah dungeon, and that produced the book *Tribes with Flags*, now a classic of Middle Eastern foreign correspondence.

By comparison, this attempt to make sense of the conflict that has engulfed Syria since 2011 feels rushed and uneven. Glass asks how the uprising degenerated into a war of such savagery, and finds his answer in the rise of religious extremism and the meddling of foreign powers. There's plenty here on how the Sunni theocracies

of Saudi Arabia and Qatar 'funded the groups that became ISIS', along with numerous examples of the sadism of the jihadis.

No-one would dispute that regional powers are now fighting a proxy war on Syrian soil. But this argument needs to be balanced by an honest account of Assad's role in the burning of Syria. There's little on how decades of state brutality turned the country into a powder keg, less on the ruthless violence used against unarmed protesters, and almost nothing on Assad's indiscriminate barrel bombing of civilians. Readers looking for insight into the origins and mentality of ISIS will also come up empty handed. In a book about Syria's war, these are omissions that cannot be overlooked.

★★ DA orbooks.com



BOOKS

REVIEWS EDITOR: **Vanessa Baird** email: vanessab@newint.org
Reviewers: Dan Adamson, Louise Gray, Jo Lateu, Peter Whittaker.

STAR RATING

★★★★★ EXCELLENT ★★★★★ VERY GOOD ★★★ GOOD ★★ FAIR ★ POOR

Also out there...

MUSIC Geoffrey Gurrumul

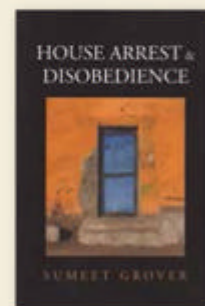
Yunupingu (right), certainly one of Australia's most important voices, is on sublime form in his new release, *The Gospel Album* (Skinnyfish/MVKA Records). Dedicated to his mother and his aunts, the Gumatj clan musician revisits the Methodist songs from his early days on Elcho Island. Delivered in his tremulous high tenor and minimal accompaniment, these are intimate and emotional musical events.

From the other side of the world, the Afro-Peruvian powerhouse that is **Novalima** is back in action with *Planetario* (Wonderwheel Recordings). An emphasis on percussion, swing, electronic bleeps and catchy vocals make the album a great summer soundtrack. North American readers have a chance to see the band as it passes through in July and August.



movements that opposed the First World War, and to 'create some cultural self-defence against the government's use of history to bolster present political commitments to militarism'. The book is available to buy direct from theworldismycountry.info.

Dedicated 'to India', Sumeet Grover's **House Arrest & Disobedience** (Smallbury Press) is a powerful collection of poems focusing on violence against women, civil disobedience, poverty and sexualities. Accessible, melodious – and hard-hitting.



FILM There is a stunning shot in Abderrahmane Sissako's **Timbuktu**. A herder accidentally shoots a fisher and crosses a wide, shallow river as his victim slowly dies on the other side. A personal drama unfolds against a panoramic vista. Sissako examines political turmoil that might merit a few column inches in the press – here the invasion of northern Mali by al-Qaeda militants – by showing its effect on the lives of ordinary people. Tragic and beautiful.

In Ana Lily Amirpour's **A Girl Walks Home Alone at Night**, the girl is a vampire, destined to be alone, and to live at night. That is until she meets an innocent young man who accepts her.

In black and white, and set in a place that seems half America, half Iran, with humour, style and good music. But with violence too, and the idea that many lives are lived in the same way – on the edge, in the dark.



BOOKS As a former US Deputy Assistant Secretary of State responsible for policy towards China, Thomas J Christensen had a rare insight into the reality of US-China relations. **The China Challenge** (WW Norton & Co) is a scholarly look at what the country's growing economic and political clout may mean for the rest of the world, and why a China that decides to focus on national and regional rather than global issues could herald unexpected

problems for the rest of us.

The World is My Country is a lovely little book from Peace News containing poems, posters and potted histories to celebrate the people and



OPEN WINDOW

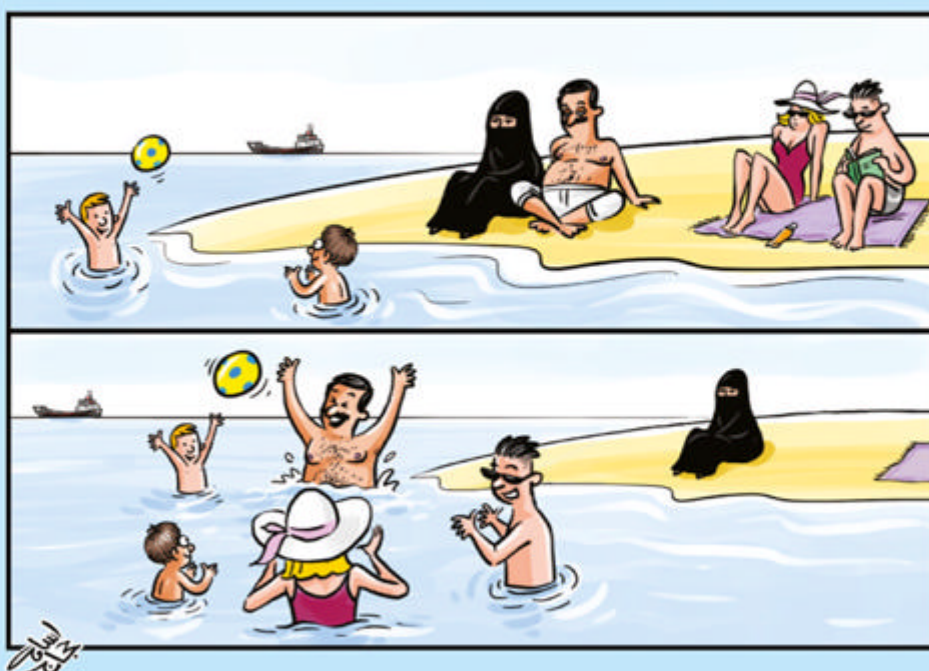
Each month we showcase the work of a different cartoonist – in collaboration with cartoonmovement.com

THIS MONTH

Osama Hajjaj from Jordan with 'Women's Freedom'.

Since the publication of this cartoon, **Osama Hajjaj** has received death threats from supporters of 'Islamic State' based in Jordan. Osama responded: 'Those cowards won't stop me. I still believe that freedom of thought and expression is a human right.'

Osama is based in the Jordanian capital, Amman, where he currently works for the *Al Arab Al Youm* newspaper, though he also posts daily cartoons on his own Facebook page.





Hillary Clinton and the Vermont socialist

Here are a few legislative proposals that have no chance of prevailing in Washington DC:

- The US Congress should pass a tax on financial speculation and use the \$180 billion it is projected to draw from Wall Street by 2023 to make college free for all students seeking higher education.
- The federal government should amend the Constitution to outlaw the corporate purchasing of democracy by billionaires such as the Koch brothers, who have announced that they will lead an effort by wealthy conservatives to spend \$889 million on the 2016 election cycle.
- Lawmakers should adjust the federal minimum wage, currently set at \$7.25 per hour, up to \$15.
- The US should stake its claim to civilization by implementing a truly universal and publicly funded healthcare system.

All of these proposals fall far outside the realm of the possible in current US politics. And they all happen to be good ideas.

Furthermore, they are all planks in the platform of one candidate for the Democratic nomination for president: Vermont Senator Bernie Sanders.

Vermont is a small state in New England best known for being home to Green Mountain ski bums, weed-smoking organic farmers and Ben & Jerry's ice cream. Sanders identifies as a democratic socialist and normally campaigns for office as an independent. In the US, these two things will typically not get you elected town dogcatcher, much less win you a seat in the Senate. But Vermont has proudly sent Sanders to Washington for the past 24 years.

Although he has scant prospect of besting Hillary Clinton, Sanders has nevertheless emerged as her most compelling challenger in the Democratic nomination for President.

The US Left has a vexed history in presidential races. In the past quarter



Forget Ben & Jerry's – Vermont has Bernie Sanders.

century, most protest candidates have possessed little sense of what they hoped to accomplish given their infinitesimally small chances of winning. (See the 2004 and 2008 campaigns of Kucinich, Dennis.)

When they do pose a threat, they have risked playing the role of the 'spoiler'. In 2000, this title was pinned on Green Party candidate Ralph Nader, who was seen as siphoning crucial votes away from Al Gore in a historically close contest in Florida.

It's debatable whether Nader really deserves the blame for George W Bush's win – especially considering that the number of votes Bush received from Florida's registered *Democrats* alone was twice Nader's total tally in the state. Still, the Green Party has failed to establish itself as any sort of formidable organization in the years since, casting doubt on whether it was truly ready to be taken seriously.

There are several reasons why the Sanders campaign is different. First, he's running in the Democratic primary, so the spoiler charge does not apply. Second, with Hillary as the overwhelming favourite, the Democratic field is sorely in need of a candidate who actually believes in something.

If there is a positive side to the Clintons' rank political opportunism, it's that their cravenness makes them unusually susceptible to a challenge from the left. Hillary will say anything she must to avoid being embarrassingly upstaged in the primary debates. And this could mean she has to steal an idea or two from the Vermont socialist.

If that happens, she will at least have a couple of newfound proposals that are worth fighting for. And social movements can work hard to make it uncomfortable for her to disown them later.

Like it or not, presidential races are one of the few entry points into political discussion for a large number of Americans. In this context, the positions voiced by Democratic and Republican hopefuls become the boundaries of permissible political debate in the country.

Having Bernie Sanders in the race provides an opportunity to put forth a few legislative proposals that have no chance of prevailing in Washington DC. And it also provides an opportunity for people to ask, 'Why not?' ■

Mark Engler's new book *This Is An Uprising: How Nonviolent Revolt Is Shaping the Twenty-first Century* will be released in 2016. He can be reached via the website DemocracyUprising.com

King and country



A year after Thailand's military seized control, there is no indication of when the next election will be. In a country that has hit the headlines with its popular protests, JO ECKERSLEY asks why the streets are now so quiet.

The military set up a checkpoint opposite

Saowanee Alexander's workplace last year, shortly after the coup. The makeshift four-poled tent over the road from Ubon Ratchathani University is staffed by five or six conscripts each day. They patrol the campus in a pickup truck, eventually taking their leave at midnight.

Saowanee doesn't see it as a 'serious' checkpoint. Rather, 'they want to let us know that they are here, and make us feel their presence'.

Since the coup on 22 May last year, Thailand's military government, the National Council for Peace and Order, has really started to make its mark on everyday life in the Southeast Asian country. The military are in the streets and on the TV, and they have started joining the police in clamping down on petty crime. In July last year tourists on Patong Beach were surprised to see 100 troops making their way down the sandy stretch to

evict vendors who were – as the district chief explained – 'blocking the beach'.

The military have even made it into the national school curriculum. Children are required to learn and recite a list of 12 traditional 'core Thai values', written by the country's Prime Minister, former general Prayuth Chan-ocha.* Just to make sure they are remembered, the government has released a special set of online stickers.

The Prime Minister holds a weekly address to the nation called 'returning happiness to the people', which he uses to make it explicitly clear what he expects of the country's 67 million citizens. They often fail to live up to his expectations.

Flawless values

Rangsan (not his real name), a fashion journalist from Bangkok, was searching the

Farewell, democracy: using the *Hunger Games*' three-fingered salute, which represents thanks and goodbye to a loved one, a Thai woman marks the perceived end of democracy in her country.

ZUMA Press, Inc./Alamy

*The 12 core values can be seen here: nin.tl/12-core-values

internet last year when he saw a green message. It read: 'The website you are accessing has inappropriate information. It has been blocked by the Ministry of ICT Thailand.' The mistake he had made was searching for porn. Despite the fact Thailand is an international sex-tourism destination, the junta does not countenance its own citizens watching porn online.

'They censor everything that they think is not right or is not proper for Thai people, like we are so clean and well-behaved. It's so wrong,' said Rangsan.

When Nattanan Warintarawet, a high-school student, launched a campaign against the 12 core Thai values, the Education Minister seemed genuinely shocked. 'From 1 to 12, these values are flawless,' Narong Pipatanasai told local media. 'If the imposition of the 12 values is wrong, we have to see if those [opposing this] are abnormal.'

To make sure they avoid awkward situations like this, the military have become proactive. Ten days after the coup, Saowanee and some colleagues at the university were called in by a group of high-ranking officers. 'They basically asked us not to engage in political activity,' she said. 'I don't know what they meant by this. We asked if it was a demand or if we would be followed. They said no, they were just asking us if we could co-operate. They were very courteous, actually.'

Saowanee consciously chose to ignore this request for self-censorship, and she remains vocal, but there is one thing which she doesn't feel safe talking about: the King.

King Bhumibol Adulyadej, 87, plays a pivotal role in Thai politics despite his advanced years. The law stipulates that his honour is so important that no-one should defame or insult him, or the monarchy in general. The offence is called *lèse majesté*, and the punishment is up to 15 years in jail. Previous cases suggest that it is no defence if the statement in question is in fact true.

Giles Ji Ungpakorn, an academic from Bangkok, was charged with *lèse majesté* in 2009. He learned that his trial would be held in secret, and the outcome was 'done and dusted' before it had even taken place. Within a month he left his friends, his home, his job, and moved to Britain.

'I was charged eventually with eight counts of *lèse majesté*,' he said, 'and I could have been put in prison for 10 years for each of them. The prisons are barbaric, medieval.'

He later found out a member of staff from where he worked had spoken to the authorities after reading his book *A Coup for the Rich*. The characteristically authoritarian Thai state encourages its citizens to inform on each other: last year a young woman was accused of *lèse majesté* by her own parents. Despite this, Giles doesn't believe the monarchy is dominant.

The reds and yellows

'Most people don't understand that the King is actually very weak,' Giles explained. 'All the things that they think indicate the King's power could be said of Queen Elizabeth in Britain; it's just a formality. But the way in which the monarchy is used by the military – that's different.'

The monarchy and the military have a cosy relationship with each other which dates back to Bhumibol's earliest days as King. In 1957 Field Marshal Sarit Thanarat instigated a coup – 1 of 12 successful coups in the past eight decades. Communism was growing in the region, and Sarit organized for the King to tour Thailand, visiting the rural borders of the country and consolidating a sense of national identity.

Jong Sricharoen is from Loei Province, on the northwest border with Laos, where it is 'normal' to have a photo of King Bhumibol hanging in your house. 'People in my area believe in the King,' she said, 'because a long time ago he came to the area, which is in the countryside, a very small village, and brought development projects.'

Michael Montesano, co-coordinator of the Thailand Studies Programme at the Institute of Southeast Asian Studies in Singapore, sees these tours as calculated military manoeuvres. '[Field Marshal Sarit] decided that he would legitimize the sort of dictatorship he wanted to build by investing it with the trappings of Thai culture, and he worked very deliberately to return the monarchy to a central, symbolic and legitimating role in Thai society. Thai culture was essentially recreated from 1958 onwards,' he said.

Today, Thai values continue to be reinforced by the state. But they often come into conflict with the reality of modern Thailand, which is in many ways liberal and diverse. Rangsan thinks attitudes to the sex trade are uniquely strange.

'Thais are the most hypocritical people in the world,' he said. 'This is the best place for sex tourism but we don't accept that in every corner of the city we have prostitution. We don't accept what we are.'

What Thailand's values are, and what they should be in the future, are subjects of intense disagreement. There is bitter division across the country, but nowhere more so than between the red- and yellow-shirts.

Yellow is the colour of the King, but the yellow-shirt protest movement didn't grow out of support for him. Rather, it grew out of hatred for former Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra. The first formal yellow-shirt

The law stipulates that the King's honour is so important that no-one should defame or insult him, or the monarchy in general. It is no defence if the statement in question is in fact true

organization, the People's Alliance for Democracy (PAD), was established in 2006 in opposition to Thaksin's leadership.

The PAD hated Thaksin for a number of reasons, but corruption was regularly cited. The PAD was made up of 'early winners in Thailand's post-1985 economic boom', according to Michael Montesano, and many saw Thaksin's progressive, socially inclusive policies – such as a universal healthcare programme – as a threat to their economic status.

Elections confirmed that he was a hugely popular figure. For the yellow-shirts, it naturally followed that those who were voting for Thaksin were ill-informed.

Tyrell Haberkorn, an expert in Thai cultural

Groundhog Day

Fast forward to 22 May last year and history repeated itself. It was Groundhog Day for Thailand as the military took over, having forced another Shinawatra prime minister out of office a few weeks beforehand – this time Thaksin's sister Yingluck. Since then, although 'people actually do want resistance', according to Giles, the siblings – who are both in exile – have made it 'very clear that they don't want any mobilization'. The UDD leadership has largely followed their instructions.

The lack of organized opposition has left the streets quiet. Although martial law was lifted in April this year, the received wisdom is that this was a cynical attempt to placate the international tourist trade, as many insurance

companies refuse to offer packages to countries imposing martial law.

In the short term, there isn't much hope for the red-shirts jailed over the last decade. Saowanee and her friends set up a fund to give 2,000 baht a month – about \$60 – to the families of four Ubon Ratchathani protesters who were sentenced to 34 years in jail for arson in 2011.

'It's very disheartening to see them in prison,' she said. 'There's one woman – she's only in her early twenties – and the last time I was talking to them she said she has had to let it go, let it be.'

Saowanee isn't hopeful for the future: 'I just want to see how bad things get at this point, how bizarre things can be. Nothing right now surprises me at all.

If it didn't affect our lives we would be laughing the whole time.'

Will the status quo continue? The prospect of gradual change seems unlikely given recent history. Even if the military call a new election down the line, what's to stop them from taking it away again when things don't go their way?

A likely catalyst for change will be the death of the King. Rangsana sees this as a 'critical time, as the Crown Prince will have a lot of problems'. Crown Prince Vajiralongkorn was already the subject of private gossip over his personal life when, in 2002, he was financially linked with Thaksin Shinawatra in a media report.

Without the King as the ultimate legitimiser, it may be easier for the whole of Thailand's populace to see the state as it really is: a naked military dictatorship. ■

Jo Eckersley is a freelance journalist working in Colombo, Sri Lanka.

Thai values continue to be reinforced by the state. But they often come into conflict with the reality of modern Thailand



Supporters of the King gathered outside his hospital when he was admitted last December. The monarchy, still revered by many, is considered beyond reproach.

politics working at the Australian National University, is blunt about the reason why the yellow-shirts do not support democracy: 'The view in certain parts of the elite is that some people are simply less human.'

The PAD took to the streets and shut down Bangkok in 2006, and Thaksin's government was ousted.

As he was being deposed, supporters of democracy rallied. The red-shirts, mainly made up of people on lower incomes, were united by Thaksin much like the yellows. And they were equally passionate. In March 2010, leaders of the red-shirt's United Front for Democracy Against Dictatorship (UDD) made a call-out for donations of 1,000 pints of blood from supporters, which were thrown at the government's headquarters. A month later, a brutal military crackdown – led by none other than Prayuth Chan-ocha (the current Prime Minister) – resulted in the deaths of 90 red-shirt protesters.



The delicious taste of irony

As a political comedian, I am genuinely worried that politics is now so absurd that it's impossible to satirize. How, in a world where the London-born leader of Australia, Tony Abbott, wants to stop immigration, or noted war criminal Tony Blair is given an award by Save The Children, can you possibly create something more farcical than the truth? If I had conspiratorial leanings I'd be tempted to conclude that this was all a sinister ploy to put me out of a job.

The two-faced shamelessness of modern politicians is staggering. British Conservative MP Sajid Javid recently suggested that a strike should only be legitimate if it gets 40-per-cent support in a union vote. He said this five days after his Conservative Party won an election with the support of only 27 per cent of the electorate. It's almost as if they don't let you become a politician unless you agree to have brain surgery to remove your self-awareness.

Last year, Oxfam dared to suggest that Britain's rising poverty levels might, perhaps, maybe, possibly be caused by austerity making everyone poor. It's an argument that is controversial only to people who don't believe in the concept of cause and effect.

Oxfam's claim led to fury from Conservative MPs, who were 'appalled' by what they said was an 'overtly political campaign' for a charity. Incidentally, I'm always fascinated by what different groups of people find appalling. For example, Conservatives are appalled by an anti-poverty charity suggesting that taking everyone's money away might put them into poverty. Whereas what appalls me, as a bleeding-heart leftwinger, is POVERTY. THE ACTUAL POVERTY. THAT'S THE THING PEOPLE SHOULD BE APPALLED BY.

I guess that leftwingers are appalled at injustice, whereas

rightwingers are appalled at the idea of being criticized. I'm not necessarily saying that leftwingers are better than rightwingers for this, but I definitely am saying that.

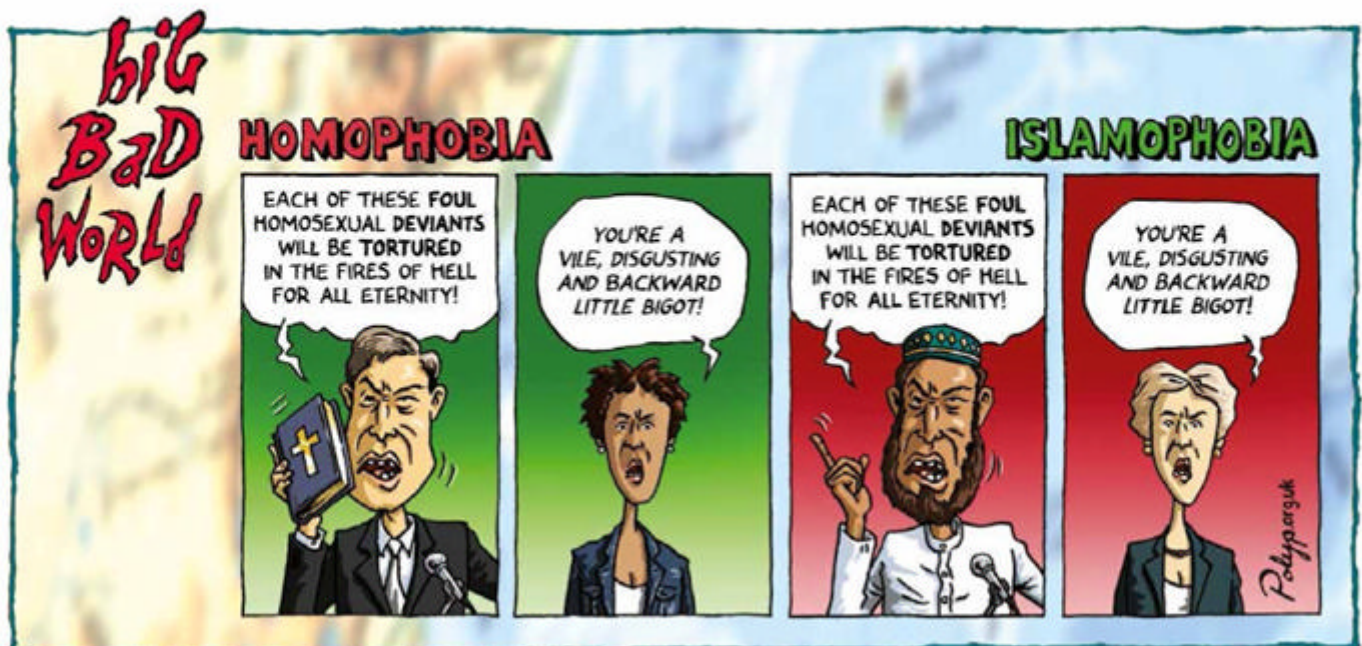
One blustering Conservative MP even went so far as to say that 'Oxfam are nothing more than a leftwing propaganda machine!' Well, if it's leftwing to suggest that actions may have consequences, and to introduce facts into an argument, then yes, I suppose you're right. Or left. By the way, if you can't afford to buy one then you can make your own leftwing propaganda machine at home: simply take this copy of *New Internationalist*, gaffer-tape it to an iPad, and drop it in a bowl of instagrammed quinoa.

Some Conservatives are now calling for Oxfam's charitable status to be removed. What you may not know is that many British politicians were educated at Eton, the sixth most expensive private school in the country. Though in Britain we call them 'public schools', because we love the delicious taste of irony.

Eton also, by a weird twist of fate, has charitable status, which gives it very generous tax breaks. So, Eton-educated politicians are now calling for Oxfam's charity status to be removed. How on earth can any comedian top that? Eton is literally a rightwing propaganda machine.

As it happens, I didn't donate to Oxfam before I saw this story. Now I give them £10 a month. No need to thank me. I'm not doing it for praise; I'm not even doing it to fight poverty. I'm doing it for a much more admirable reason: to make Conservatives angry. ■

Chris Coltrane is a stand-up comedian and anti-austerity activist. Follow him on Twitter: [chris_coltrane](#). His show 'Activism Is Fun' is a free download at [chriscoltrane.com](#)



Behind a steel gate and high walls in Afghanistan, runaway girls and women are hiding. They have been married off as children, beaten by their husbands, humiliated by their families and sometimes forced into prostitution. Immediately after escaping, there is often nowhere for them to go.

Safe but

Asifa*, aged 24

My father was a member of the Taliban. When I was three he promised me to an older man for a lot of money. Then he died, and my mother married my father's driver, also a Talib. My stepfather was a drug addict and very violent. He would constantly hit my mother and prostitute her. To make her less aware and more able to handle so many men, he plied her with alcohol.

At the age of nine I could no longer take all the beatings – I felt really sad and alone. Marriage was the only way I could see of escaping.

Unfortunately, it did not change my situation. The man I was betrothed to was 30 years older than me. As a young girl I knew nothing about the wedding night, or relationships. On top of that, my stepfather kept bothering us. He hated my husband – I believe that was why he hurt me so much.

When I was 13, my stepfather pulled me out of the house. He took me to an unknown place and stabbed me repeatedly: in my face, arms, head, for no reason at all. Then he pulled out all my nails.

Once he decided to try to sell me to other men, I had had enough. I had seen what it did to my mother, so I ran to the police station and begged them to lock me up – I was so afraid my stepfather would kill me. My case went to court, but instead of listening to me the judge immediately called my stepfather. He bribed the judge, and I was sent to jail for two years.

During my imprisonment, my stepfather beheaded my mother, but was never convicted. Even the police were afraid of him after he threatened to blow up the police station. I wept a lot during that time.

In a second attempt to escape him, when I was released I moved to another city, but he found me, and the abuse continued. I was constantly in the hospital until the Ministry of Women's Affairs brought me to the shelter. I was 20 years old, sick and deprived, but for the first time I was finally able to forget.

The only thing I have left from home is my radio. It was a present from my father and I have always kept it with me. I like to listen to 'The Voice of Afghan Women', which has strong women openly talking about their problems. It makes me proud that I am one of them now.

*names have been changed

Arriving at the shelters, these women are severely traumatized. The Afghan Women's Skills Development Centre offers safety and psychological and legal support. Two women who have been helped by the Centre tell their story to VALESKA HOVENER.

not free

Maryam*, aged 29

My father was an army general when he died in a plane crash, and my mother refused to remarry. She supported us by working as a government typist, and I was allowed to go to school.

When the Taliban came to power, my mother was forced to quit her job, and I was made to marry her cousin, at the age of 13.

During our engagement I found out my husband-to-be was epileptic. I tried to give him back his ring, but his parents promised they would buy him a shop. This convinced my mother that I had to marry him.

After my wedding I left school and moved in with my in-laws. They were very nice to me because they knew their son had problems, but they'd lied about the store. My mother-in-law told me I must have children, and I quickly gave birth to two sons and a daughter.

Everything changed when my brother and in-laws suddenly passed away through illness. From one epileptic attack per month, my husband now had five a day. He could not work any more, which made him very aggressive.

He took out his frustration on me with his fists. He also hurt himself because of his condition and ended up spending months in hospital. Once, my husband hit me in the face and gave me a bloody nose, and when my mother said something to him about it, he took his revenge. He stabbed her several times with a knife. She could no longer walk and suffered a permanent brain injury.

He then ran off to Ghazni with our children. He returned after five months, but I could not bring myself to go back to him. For three years I lived with my mother, under constant threat from my husband. I was not allowed to see my children and when the divorce was settled I moved to a women's shelter.

I have been in three different shelters. I left the second one because my mother died, which caused me a lot of emotional strain.

In the third shelter, here in Kabul, I feel safe but not free. Just like my mother, I want to earn my own money. I would like to set up my own beauty shop, because I am always busy with nail polish and make-up. Those things represent freedom for me. As soon as I get out of the shelter, I will visit my mother's grave. Then I will get my children back.

Valeska Hovener is a Dutch journalist who writes on women's issues in The Netherlands and around the globe. Her website is invogelvlucht.com

Marielle van Uiter is a Dutch conflict photographer who operates in Iraq, Syria, Afghanistan and Gaza. Her website is paralleluniversum.nl

Masih Alinejad

The Iranian journalist posted pictures of herself without a hijab, and sparked a movement of women – and men – determined to reclaim a stealthy freedom. LUCINDA HOMA GRAY finds out more.

It has taken just one year for the Facebook-fuelled

‘My Stealthy Freedom’ campaign, spearheaded by exiled Iranian journalist Masih Alinejad, to attract nearly a million likes and the international recognition of a human rights award from the Geneva Summit for Human Rights and Democracy.

Aimed at reversing the compulsory hijab law in Iran which forces women to wear headscarves, it began with the simple act of Alinejad posting on her Facebook page a bare-headed picture of herself in the streets of London, with the comment: ‘Every time I run and feel the wind in my hair it reminds me of the time when my hair was a hostage in the hands of the Iranian government.’

The response was massive: an outpouring from women in Iran lamenting the freedom Alinejad now enjoyed. So she posted another picture of herself, this time inside Iran without a headscarf, and has since been ‘bombarded’ with pictures and videos from Iranian women following suit.

So far, the women have not faced any serious repercussions. The government has attacked Alinejad on state TV – saying that she was raped because she wasn’t wearing a headscarf, that she is not a good person, she’s anti-revolutionary, she is supported by Western governments – and attempted sabotage by hacking Facebook accounts to post fake pro-hijab photos and comments. But they have not been able to arrest her and halt the campaign.

As Iranian gender equality activist Soudeh Rad commented: ‘[this] brave act, generated from the grassroots, is the persistence of people to gather around one specific demand.’

In fact, the momentum continues to build, as women are now sharing in more detail how the compulsory hijab affects their daily lives. Last year, 3.6 million women were warned in the streets about their hair and clothing by the morality police. One woman recounts how her daughter jumped into the road when she had to let go of her hand to fix her headscarf in the wind; another explains her dilemma at having to remove her clothes and headscarf when faced with jumping into a river to save her daughter.

Alinejad can relate to these stories. Coming from a religious and traditional rural family, she was forced to wear the veil at all times from childhood. In fact, she is the first woman in several generations of her family to expose her hair in public. ‘My relationship with the veil was complicated; it became a part of my identity,



Monir Tag

and it was not that easy to take off. I had to fight with everybody [and] I was worried about people’s judgement. I didn’t want to break my mother’s heart. The hijab can be a sign of honour in the family.’

The internalized shame remained with her even after she left Iran. Alinejad recalls the first time she appeared on television (on US federal government broadcaster Voice of America) without her hair covered, in 2011. ‘I’ll never forget that day. When I left the studio, I called my brother. He said, “you have been living so long for the good name of your family but how about yourself?” Yes, I got a lot of complaints from my mother, but that was when I started to be myself on TV.’

Iranian women have been living with the compulsory hijab for more than 30 years, so why the rebellion now? In a country where all media is state-owned, Alinejad believes that ‘through social media you cannot hide the other face of Iran. [It is] giving a platform to people who have never had a serious debate about their rights.’ This includes those women who choose to wear a hijab but disagree with its compulsory nature, due to the tensions it causes in society. And those men who feel insulted by the state’s claims that their lack of self-control means women must cover up.

After an appeal to men also to don the headscarf as a sign of solidarity with women, many have responded with pictures, widening the pressure base. ‘If more and more men join us, the government cannot keep us silent,’ says Alinejad.

Having broken her own silence with her novel *Taje-e-Khar* (Crown of Thorns) in which she writes about her private life, her long-term goal is now ‘to bring all secrets into the media... empowering [Iranian] women to talk about everything they shouldn’t talk about – their body, their identity, themselves. When any individual woman has got the power to talk about herself, then no-one can hide her, no-one can oppress her or force her to be someone else.’ ■

Visit *My Stealthy Freedom* at facebook.com/StealthyFreedom

Lucinda Homa Gray is an Anglo-Iranian journalist from London living in Seattle. You can find links to her articles at lucindahomagrays.com

Puzzle Page by Axe

The crossword prize is a voucher for our online shop to the equivalent of \$30. Only the winner will be notified. Send your entries by 20 August to: New Internationalist Puzzle Page, The Old Music Hall, 106-108 Cowley Road, Oxford OX4 1JE, UK; fax to +44 1865 403346; or email a scan to: puzzlepage@newint.org
Winner for Crossword 201: Cate Lyle, Nunhead, London, England.

Crossword 203

CRYPTIC Across

- 5/7 Hertford? So-so; we ransacked a shelter for outlaws (8,6)
9 Run about in ring daily (7)
10 The Spanish, American and British earlier make European high spot (6)
11 Dog with ears pricked in Mexican border town? (9)
13 Muse about a Manx-type cat? (4)
14 Siamese taking hour off, pale, going to the country (6)
16 Dodgy senator runs away and is repentant (6)
18 City of gold discovered in the year 1000 (4)
19 Al once played with a leading pub team (9)
22 Proclamation: 'The heads of duchies in kingdom, they are treasonous' (6)
23 Almost rude and extremely trite book of verse (7)
25 The common soldier is more smelly (6)
26 Poles capture digger before contracted snow transport gets to Russian city (8)

CRYPTIC Down

- 1 African-speaking commercial set in fashionable surroundings (6)
2 Trieste area's passing up boozy fruit flies ruined (6)
3 Set up horse – love to ride kind of Indian-style (4)
4 Spanish region is one to like; grassland, with no borders to cross over (8)
6 Greek character's guided back on to the oracle site (6)
7 Virtually clear cape near an Australian port (9)
8 Polish hero's committed to cross here (7)

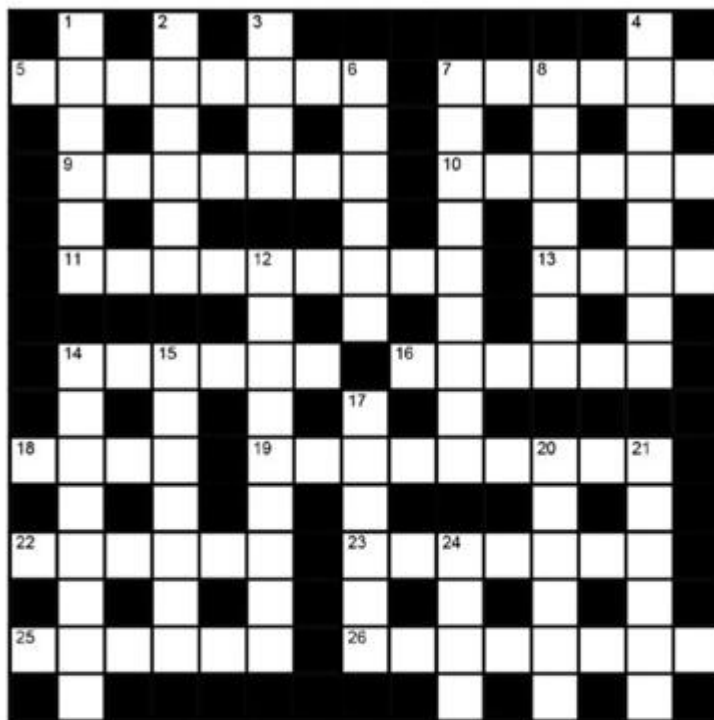
- 12 Mongol's capital is moved to Barnaul (4,5)
14 Runs into current typical of low latitudes (8)
15 Anger over random tusk here in Siberia, north of 12 (7)
17 Kind of vaults required to lay down some French wine (6)
20 Biblical king subdued part of Yemen and part of Ethiopia (6)
21 Relaxing to order? (2,4)
24 Spanish town's send-up of Christmas (4)

QUICK Across

- 5/7 Former royal hunting ground, home to a legendary medieval English outlaw (8,6)
9 Lasting a day (7)
10 Europe's highest mountain (5642 m) in the Caucasus Range (6)
11 Juarez's capital, 1862-67, of the (same-named) largest state in Mexico (9)
13 Muse of history, sister of Erato (4)
14 Republic of China, as popularly called (6)
16 Makes amends (6)
18 N English city and diocese, Roman Eboracum (4)
19 Main city of Catalunya (9)
22 Oppressor's stringent rule (6)
23 First Latin edition of the Bible, translated by Jerome (7)
25 Commissioned officer who has been promoted from enlisted status (6)
26 W Russian city, frequently sacked because of its strategic position (8)

QUICK Down

- 1 N African language group which includes Hausa (6)



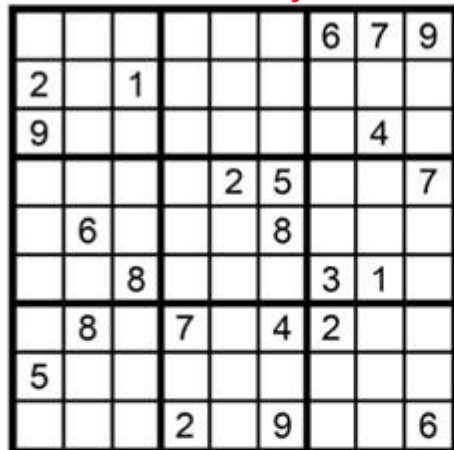
- 2 -----Venezia Giulia: autonomous region of NE Italy (6)
3 Citizen of India, of a former Portuguese colony (4)
4 Autonomous region of Spain, capital Oviedo (8)
6 Important ancient Greek religious site dedicated to Apollo (6)
7 City and largest port of Western Australia (9)
8 Cross the -----: take an irrevocable step (7)
12 Capital of Mongolia (4,5)
14 Climatic zone between 23.5 degrees N and 23.5 degrees S (8)
15 Major Russian city on the trans-Siberian railway (7)
17 French white wine town of the Bordeaux region (6)
20 'Western Somalia', to Somalians (6)
21 Chilling, so to speak (2,4)
24 Nicaragua's second-largest city (4)

LAST MONTH'S SOLUTION

Across: 1 Anshan, 4 Opiate, 9 Ahab, 10 Glaswegian, 11 Anther, 12 Oceanian, 13 Hindu Kush, 15 Fife, 16 Guam, 17 Ivy League, 21 Survival, 22 Recipe, 24 Laplanders, 25 Aran, 26 Huelva, 27 Dakota.
Down: 1 Ashanti, 2 Sabah, 3 Angarsk, 5 Pawnee, 6 Argentina, 7 Emanate, 8 Barossa valley, 14 Deauville, 16 Goulash, 18 Larissa, 19 Uppsala, 20 Ivan IV, 23 Chaco.

Sudoku 49

The Sudoku that thinks it's a word game!



Now, using the key below, substitute letters for the numbers in the north-central block...

1=T; 2=E; 3=N; 4=R; 5=A; 6=J; 7=D; 8=L; 9=U

...and make as many words as you can of five letters or more from the nine letters in the keyword, the extra clue to which is: 'Dane's Project Earth's about to return'. You cannot use the same letter more than once, nor use proper nouns (excepting the keyword), slang, offensive words, abbreviations, participles or simple plurals (adding an 's' or 'es').

GOOD 40 words of at least five letters, including 15 of six letters or more

VERY GOOD 50 words of at least five letters, including 20 of six letters or more.

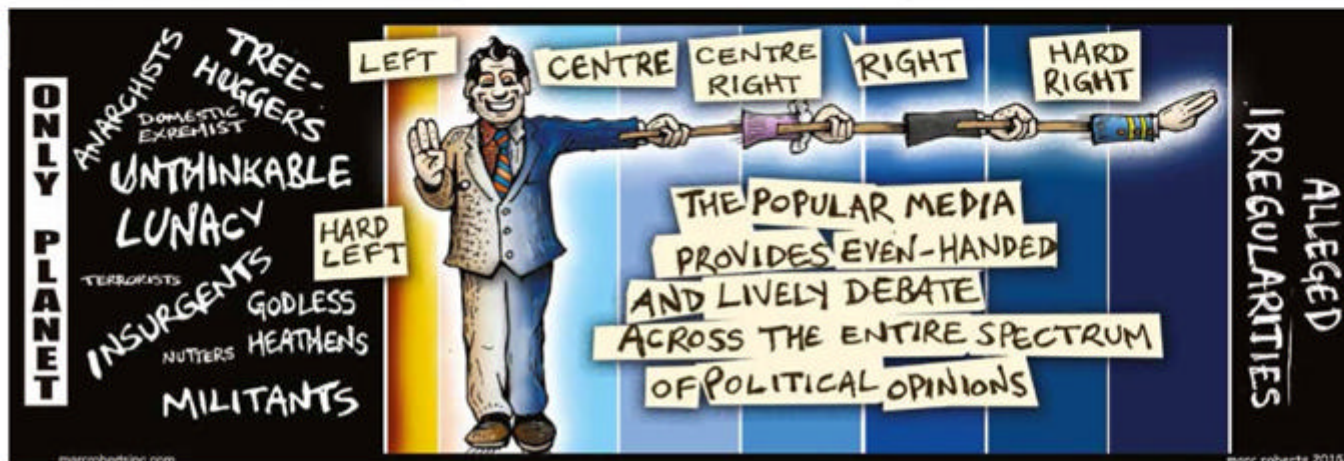
EXCELLENT 60 words of at least five letters, including 25 words of six letters or more.

Last month's **Sudoku keyword**: 'Maidstone'

Solution to Wordsearch 48: The 16 US cities were: Atlanta, Boston, Buffalo, Chicago, Columbus, Dallas, Dayton, Denver, Houston, Miami, Phoenix, Portland, San Diego, Santa Fe, Seattle, St Louis.

Wordsearch 49

Find the 16 mountain ranges hidden here.



Susana Baca

A key figure in the revival of Afro-Peruvian music, the award-winning singer-songwriter was also Peru's Minister of Culture in 2011. She talks to DIANE GHOGOMU about dedicating her life to music and garnering recognition for the marginalized Afro-Peruvian community.

The title of your latest album is *Afrodiaspora*. What does the word 'diaspora' mean to you, and what are the responsibilities of a person who is part of the diaspora?

Diaspora is a very strong word with very strong connotations. It is a shift, a shift that is sometimes forced, as it was in our [Afro-Peruvian] case, as was the shift of our men and women who were brought [to Latin America] as enslaved Africans. A 'diaspora' can be Jewish, African... It is people who are fleeing from their countries because life where they were was unlivable.

Afrodiaspora celebrates the African influence. We have done 'Afrodiaspora I' [now], but there are still many more celebrations to be had. Many more.

You were recently honoured with an Illustrious Citizen award from the Office of Human Rights in Argentina, a country which is perceived by many as having no black legacy. What do you think is the significance of being pronounced an honorary daughter of this 'white' nation?

Argentina is a country that is very expressive in its music. Though there is a lot of investigating left to do, we can affirm that there is an African influence and presence. There is an African legacy in the way that Argentines make music: the African polyrhythm is present.

The tango has an essence that clearly expresses the African presence. That rhythm, that African polyrhythm. Some people do not accept it as African. It does not matter; we will continue. Now it is the young musicians' turn to uncover, investigate and find their roots, to continue working and give the world the beautiful music that characterizes them.

There is a very particular joy in this music. I feel part of this country



[Peru] just as I feel part of Latin America. I say that I am Afro-Peruvian, and Afro-Latin American. I belong to this part of America.

I feel honoured to accept this renowned award and the recognition – it makes me incredibly happy. It is important to recognize the roots that make up our nationality. This is what we do in Peru. It has taken a lot of work, and we are going against the grain: there are many people who are against us. Now it is time for the young people to continue to create the foundation to tell the world the truth. And to tell that truth, I recommend having a passion for knowing the truth. That is the perfect path to walk.

For the young people, it is not going to be an easy road. We are going to find rocks in the road. This is our heritage, and our legacy. It is the foundation that we need to lay for the generations to come.

What advice can you give other Afro-descendants in Latin America as they work towards gaining recognition and reasserting their identity?

In my experience, it was really difficult to accept what happened to us in the past: how we were enslaved and marginalized inside our own cities where we grew up because of our skin colour or because of our hair. It was necessary to get to the bottom of the history, even though this history leaves us with wounds – deep wounds.

There is a phrase that [Baca's husband, Bolivian sociologist] Ricardo Perreira said when we were collaborating on our first book, *Del Fuego y del Agua* ['Fire and Water' – which accompanied the album of the same name]: 'This is an exorcism of our memory – we have to do it.' It took a lot to write that book. We had to go through history and recognize and feel a lot of hatred. And I recognized and I felt a lot of hate.

I hated the people that enslaved us; I deeply hated the history that my people told me. But hatred creates sickness. I learned from my aunts and from my mother that it is much better to forgive. Do not forget, but forgive. That is what liberates us.

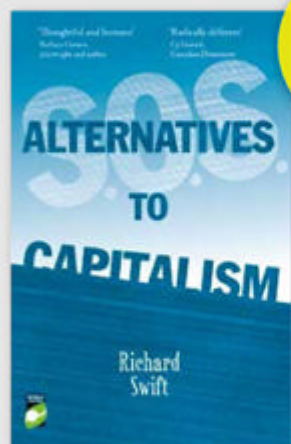
We have to do it, this exorcism of our memory. It has to hurt all the way down to the pit of your gut. We have to feel that pain and we have to cast it out of our lives. Cast it out and let it go. ■

Diane Ghogomu is a US-born educator and artist who has spent the last five years of her life in Buenos Aires entangled in Afro-diasporic activism, politics and culture.

New Internationalist books

SOS Alternatives to Capitalism

by Richard Swift



**Featured
in this
issue**

*'Richard Swift's
advocacy of
a 'democratic eco-
socialism'*

*as an alternative
to capitalism is sustained
and persuasive... Eloquent
and inspirational'*

Jeremy Seabrook, Red Pepper

*'Swift joins a growing
strand of 21st-century
literature that explores*

*radically different ways of organizing our economy
and politics'* Cy Gonick, Canadian Dimension magazine

Paperback/ebook, Special offers online

To see inside the books and order:
www.newint.org/books

New Internationalist

www.newint.org

How to Contact Us

Subscriptions

1-800-661-8700

newint@cdsglobal.ca

www.newint.org/subscriptions

Product Orders & Back Issues

1-877-525-9353

shop.newint.org/na

Advertising

+44 (0)1865 811420

michael@emsm.org.uk

Editorial Queries and Permissions

nican@newint.org

613-826-1319



**UNIVERSITY
OF LONDON
INTERNATIONAL
PROGRAMMES**

MA IN REFUGEE PROTECTION AND FORCED MIGRATION STUDIES

Who is a refugee?

What are states' obligations towards displaced people?

Who should be protecting refugees?

Apply now for the first distance learning MA in Refugee Protection and Forced Migration Studies. If you work, or want to work in organisations in this area, this Masters will give you:

- a prestigious qualification that will open doors in your career
- the tools to work in the field and to undertake campaigning and advocacy work
- an understanding of the fundamental issues and debates and the key legal concepts.

Benefit from supported online learning

As you study by online learning you can fit your studies around your other commitments. You also will be able to share insights and ideas with others across the world who are studying on this programme.

Developed by leading academics

The MA in Refugee Protection and Forced Migration Studies was developed by the Refugee Law Initiative, a University of London research centre. The lead academics will draw on their wide practical expertise.

Application deadline for the coming year is 1 September 2015.

Find out more and apply online

www.londoninternational.ac.uk/refugee-migration



Tackling the Issues

that really matter
with lively, thoughtful,
well-researched coverage
that respects
your intelligence.

With a strong political
agenda biased towards
global peace and justice, we
examine issues, offer insights
and suggest solutions that
are all but ignored in the
mainstream corporate media.



Subscribe now for **\$44** plus tax
for 1 year (10 issues) and
SAVE over \$25 off
the newsstand price!

Includes
FREE
access to
the digital
edition

PLUS

Receive a **FREE** Map of the World.

The revolutionary Peters' Projection presents countries in their true proportion to one another. It's a whole new way of looking at the world!

